

No. 19.

FRENCH'S AMERICAN ACTING EDITION

THE HAND OF THE LAW

A Rural Drama in Three Acts

BY

CHARLES R. ANGELL

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no,

THE HAND OF THE LAW.

STORY OF THE PLAY.

THE HAND OF THE LAW is an interesting story of New England life, the scenes being laid in the little village of Bradford, county seat of Bradford county. DAN CHAMBERLAIN, a young attorney, wins the love of EDITH HAZELTON, a village girl. DAN is chosen to the office of prosecuting attorney, defeating SQUIRE EVANS, owner of the grist mill, for re-election. Through force of circumstances he is placed in the position of prosecuting RUBEN HAZELTON, father of EDITH, on a charge of murder, the circumstantial evidence against RUBEN being great. A misunderstanding arises between EDITH and DAN, brought about by the squire, who loves EDITH, and GRACE, who is in love with DAN. The murdered man is GEORGE GREGORY, bookkeeper for the squire, and there was but one witness, EZRA, a village lad, who is struck by a chance shot from the squire's revolver before he has an opportunity to reveal the identity of the murderer. Through the work of ABNER JUDKINS, a tin badge detective, and through an accident which restores EZRA's memory, RUBEN is cleared of the murder charge and DAN wins EDITH. Comedy is furnished by ABNER and by SALLY SNODGRASS, maid-of-all work for the HAZELTONS.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

DAN CHAMBERLAIN....*A young lawyer, afterward
prosecuting attorney*
 RUBEN HAZELTON.....*A victim of drink*
 SQUIRE EVANS.....*Owner of the grist mill*
 EZRA.....*A village lad*
 LUKE HIGGINS.....*Sheriff of Bradford county*
 ABNER JUDKINS....*A tin badge detective and em-
ploye of the Hazeltons*
 MRS. HAZELTON.....*Wife of Ruben*
 GRACE EVANS.....*Daughter of the squire*
 EDITH HAZELTON.....*Daughter of Ruben*
 SALLY SNODGRASS.....*Maid-of-all work*

APPEARANCE IN ACTS.

	I	2	3
DAN.....I	I	I	
RUBEN....I	I	I	
SQUIRE....I	I	I	
EZRA.....I	I	I	
SHERIFF..I	I	I	
ABNER....I	I	I	
MRS. H....I	I	I	
GRACE....I	I	I	
EDITH....I	I	I	
SALLY....I	I	I	

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.

The Hazelton Home at Bradford.

ACT II.

Sheriff's Office, Bradford County Jail, three weeks later.

ACT III.

Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Bradford County Court House, the next day.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHARACTERS.

DAN CHAMBERLAIN—(*Lead*)—Age thirty.
Smooth face.

ACT I—Light suit; straw hat.

ACT II—Prince Albert suit. Soft hat; black shoes.

ACT III—Same as Act II.

SQUIRE EVANS—(*Character heavy*)—Age 60.
Gray side whiskers.

ACTS I, II and III—Black Prince Albert suit.
Silk hat. Soiled clothing, but not ragged, having appearance of rich but stingy effect. Carries cane.

LUKE HIGGINS—(*Character Sheriff*)—Ruddy complexion, gray hair and beard. Age 50.

ACTS I, II and III—Soft shirt, soft hat.

RUBEN HAZELTON—(*Character*)—Age 50.

ACTS I, II and III—Soft hat, soft shirt, dark trousers, shoes and coat. Drunkard appearance.
Gray hair. Smooth face.

ABNER JUDKINS—(*Comedy*)—Age twenty.

ACT I—Soft shirt, boots, coat, overalls. Dress up after tub incident in first act. Dress up in second and third acts.

EZRA CHAPMAN—(*Country boy*)—Age eighteen.

ACT I—Boots and overalls. Large straw hat.

ACT II and III—Dress up. Black suit. Sallow complexion.

MRS. HAZELTON—(*Character*)—Age fifty.—Conventional makeup for country town woman. Gray hair. Black outfit for second and third acts.

GRACE EVANS—(*Heavy*)—Age 28. Stunning summer dress first act. Summer hat and parasol.

ACT II, walking suit and hat. ACT III, same as act II.

EDITH HAZELTON—(*Lead*)—Age 23.

ACT I—Shirtwaist suit. Carries sunbonnet.

ACT II—Black suit.

ACT III—Same as act II.

SALLY SNODGRASS—(*Comedy Ingenue*)—Age nineteen.

ACT I—Hired girl makeup. Gingham apron, large shoes, etc.

ACT II—Dress up. (*Comical*)

ACT III—Same as act I. On last appearance dress up. (*Comical*).

PROPERTIES.

ACT I.

Nickel badge for Abner.
Pail for Sally.
Five cent novel for Abner.
Wooden pump. (*practical*)
Plate for Abner.
Fishpole for Ezra.
Tin can for Ezra.
Wooden tub.
Two galvanized tubs.
Apron for Abner.
Two wooden benches.
One axe.
Pile of wood.
Parasol for Grace.
Book for Sally.
Cigar for Abner.
Cane for Squire.
Sure fire revolver for squire.
Church^r bell.
Red fire.

ACT II.

Wardrobe with top loose.
Keys for sheriff.
Desk (old)
Plain table.
Hall rack.
Rack with keys.
Extra bunch of keys for wardrobe door.
Map.
Six plain chairs.
Newspaper for sheriff.

Overcoat for sheriff.

Paper, ink, pen and envelope for desk.

Lamps or light button.

Photograph for squire.

Letter for Sally.

ACT III.

Flat top desk.

Carpet.

Hall rack.

Bookcase and books.

Papers, lawbooks, inkwell, telephone, etc., for desk.

Drop electric light for desk.

Tin box and papers for Ezra.

Papers for Dan.

Seven chairs.

Curtains for two windows.

SETTING FOR FIRST ACT.

A—Bench.

B—Tree with seat.

C—Churn.

D—Fence (Picket).

E—Barn.

F—Pile of wood.

G—Axe.

H—Pump and tub.

(Curtain.)

The Hand of the Law.

ACT I.

(ABNER is discovered in tree seat reading dime novel.)

ABNER. (*reads*) Ha, ha, laughed Handsome Harry, as he gazed upon the bound form of Daredevil Dan, the brave detective. Ha, ha, he laughed again as he unsheathed his knife and prepared to send the sleuth to his doom. But he had reckoned without his host, for, breaking his bonds, Daredevil Dan sprang to his feet and grappled with the villain. The next instant a knife flashed in the air (*becomes excited*) but it was not Daredevil Dan, but Handsome Harry, who fell, pierced to the heart. (*looks up—talks*) Now, there's sum class in bein' a detective like Daredevil Dan. I'll bet he never had t' split wood an' carry water. But I guess such things don't happen t' real detectives like me. Here I've been a member of th' International Detectives' bureau fer two months an' even paid two dollars fer a badge (*rubs badge pinned to suspender with coat sleeve*)—an' nothin' like that ever happened t' me.

(SALLY appears in doorway R. with pail and advances toward ABNER. ABNER does not see her.)

ABNER. (*continues*) A man don't have no chance nowadays.

SALLY. Where's th' man?

(ABNER jumps to his feet and tries to conceal the novel under his coat, but SALLY notices it.)

SALLY. (*points finger at ABNER*) Ah, ha, Abner Judkins, reading a dime novel again. I'm going to tell Mrs. Hazelton and she will learn ye t' waste yer time like that.

ABNER. Sal, ye wouldn't snitch on a feller, would ye?

SALLY. (*descends steps*) Well, you jest try me an' see.

ABNER. Aw, Sal, ye know I'd do anything fer ye.

SALLY. (*eagerly*) Will ye wipe dishes?

ABNER. Aw, Sal.

SALLY. Well, then, I'll——

ABNER. (*disgustedly*) Aw, I'll do et.

SALLY. (*sits on steps*) Heard anything from th' election, Ab?

ABNER. Naw, et's been too durn hot t' go chasin' down street. But I don't see how they kin beat Dan Chamberlain fer prosecutin' attorney.

SALLY. Ye never kin tell, Ab. Squire Evans is pretty strong in these parts, an' he's more then likely t' land th' office fer another term. Ye know a young lawyer like Dan hasn't got much chance against a crafty old politician like th' squire, especially when so many of th' voters owe th' squire money.

around here ef Dan does get beat.

SALLY. Oh, won't it? You jest tell Edith

ABNER. Well, et won't make much difference Hazelton that.

ABNER. Gee, I clean forgot Miss Edith. She's mighty sweet on Dan, ain't she?

SALLY. I guess et's a case o' six o' one an' half

a dozen o' th' other. But Dan ain't th' only one. Squire Evans is pretty stuck on her himself.

ABNER. Why, what chance has thet dried up ol' mummy got with Miss Edith? An' him with a grown-up daughter? An' especially after takin' all th' money her father got fer th' grist mill an' givin' him a lot o' worthless minin' stock an' drivin' th' ol' man t' drink? Why Rube Hazelton is gettin' t' be a regular sot.

SALLY. Well, I know all thet, but you jest look out fer ol' Squire Evans. When he wants anything he generally gits it, an' I wouldn't put him above doin' underhand tricks ef somethin' was in his way. (*rises*)—but this ain't gettin' th' chores done. (*goes to pump*) Ab, I think ye might git me a pail o' water.

ABNER. (*rises*) Sure—I might. (*resumes his seat*)

SALLY. (*pumps*) Now Ab, you carry this pail into th' house an' wipe them dishes or I'm goin' t' tell Mrs. Hazelton about th' novel.

ABNER. Aw, Sal.

SALLY. (*ascends steps*) Go on now or I'll tell. (*exit in house*)

ABNER. (*rises, crosses R. picks up pail and turns toward steps*) I don't know whether I'm doin' this fer love or because I'm skeered. Oh, well—(*business of stumbling up steps with pail. Exits into house*)

(*Enter EZRA, whistling. Carries fishpole.*)

EZRA. (*sits L.—on tree seat*) Gee, but et's hot. (*lays down pole and mops forehead with handkerchief*) I wonder where Ab is. Probably layin' around some haystack studyin' a book on how t' be a detective. An' up t' Squire Evans' dam th' blue gills are bitin' like sixty.

(Enter ABNER from doorway. Wears gingham apron and is wiping plate with dishtowel.)

EZRA. (*continues. Gazes at ABNER*) Well, of all things.

ABNER. (*quits wiping dish*) Aw, cut et out, Ez. Et's hard enough t' have t' do this without gettin' joshed about et.

EZRA. (*laughs*) But jest think of Abner Sherlock Holmes Judkins th' noted detective havin' t' help wash dishes. Et's too durn good.

ABNER. Naw et ain't. Et's too durn bad.

EZRA. (*rises*) Well, cut et out an' come on go fishin'. Hank Bodwell says th' blue gills are bitin' fine up t' Evans' dam.

ABNER. (*looks into house. Business of looking around*) Gee, if I only could. (*hesitates a moment, then takes off apron*) By, gosh, I'm goin'. (*descends steps*)

(ABNER and EZRA start for gate and reach it.)

SALLY. (*enters from house*) Abner Judkins.

ABNER. (*turns around*) Aw what?

SALLY. I want t' know where yer goin'?

ABNER. Fishin'.

SALLY. Of course you are——

ABNER. (*brightening up*) Thet's nice of ye——

SALLY. Not.

ABNER. An' why not?

SALLY. Because I ain't goin' t' let ye. I'm goin' t' tell——

ABNER. Tattle tale. But you jest wait 'till I git t' be a great detective an' I'll show a lot of folks around here somethin'. You jest wait.

SALLY. Well, I will ef I live long enough.

ABNER. (*turns toward house and approaches steps*) Well, I s'pose I'll hev t' do et.

EZRA. (*goes out gate but turns and looks toward*

AB) So long, Ab. I wouldn't care t' go with th' assistant hired girl anyway.

(ABNER *makes for EZRA who drops fishpole and puts up his hands.*)

ABNER. Nobody kin say anything like thet t' me an' git away with et.

(ABNER and EZRA *scuffle down to front and ABNER falls backward into tub of water at pump. EZRA steps back and laughs and ABNER pulls himself ruefully from tub.*)

ABNER. (*blubbers*) Now, look what ye done. (*manages to keep face toward SALLY to hide wet seat of pants*)

EZRA. (*laughs*) Oh, well, a great detective hadn't ought t' mind a little thing like thet.

ABNER. (*business of trying to hide wet pants from SALLY*)

SALLY. (*laughs*) Why, what's th' matter, Ab?

(ABNER *runs up onto porch and grabs apron with which he hides seat of pants.*)

ABNER. (*to EZRA*) You jest wait, I'll git even with ye.

SALLY. Now Ab, you jest git into th' house an' I'll tend t' Ezra.

(ABNER *exits into house.*)

SALLY. (*approaches EZRA*) Now, Ezra, you git along t' yer fishin' an leave Ab alone.

(EZRA *picks up fishpole and exit through gate L.*)

MRS. H. (*enter through gate from L.*) My,

but et's hot. (*fans self with handkerchief*) Here I've been trampin' all over th' village lookin' fer Rube an' can't find him. Et seems as though every election day he gets drunker then the one before. (*advances down stage. Sits on tree seat*) I wonder where Edie can be. (*looks about*)

EDITH. (*enters from house*) Here I am, mother. Did you find father?

MRS. H. No, an' I looked all over th' village fer him, too.

EDITH. (*takes seat on bench by churn*) Mother, I'm worried about father. He's getting so he looks awfully bad. Why can't he stop drinking?

MRS. H. (*comes down to EDITH*) Well, Edie, I don't know. Et seems t' me his brain's affected on account o' losin' all his money in a mine thet never yielded anything but red clay. Ef it hadn't been thet we've lived together fer forty years I wouldn't stand et fer a minute.

EDITH. But do you think Squire Evans treated father fairly in that mining deal? You know at first he said he had put father's money into a mine that afterward turned out to be worth millions and then he said it was a mistake and that father's money was invested in a worthless piece of property in Montana.

MRS. H. But ye can't prove nuthin', Edie. Yer father got th' stock certificates, an' they turned out t' be worth jest th' value o' th' paper an' th' printer's ink used t' make 'em. But, Edie, I heard somethin up t' th' village thet might interest ye.

EDITH. What, mother?

MRS. H. Et's about Dan.

EDITH. (*rises and appears frightened*) Why, mother, I hope nothing has happened to Dan. Tell me, what is it?

MRS. H. (*smiles*) Oh, nothin' serious, except thet everybody says he has a mighty good chance t' be th' next prosecutin' attorney o' Bradford county.

An' I guess that interests you, doesn't it?

EDITH. (*hangs head*) Oh, mother.

MRS. H. (*places hand on EDITH's head*) Ye love Dan, don't ye, Edie?

(EDITH *hides face with hands.*)

MRS. H. (*continues*) Well, Edie, ye needn't be ashamed t' be in love with a good man, an' I don't know any better one in Bradford county.

(DAN *enters through gate, unseen by women. He listens.*)

EDITH. Well, I'm not ashamed of it. Dan is the best man in the whole world. (*rises*)

DAN. (*advances*) Well, I'm glad to hear such a good opinion of myself, especially from such a charming pair of lips.

EDITH. (*turns toward DAN*) Oh, Dan. (*rushes up steps and exits into house*)

MRS. H. (*laughing*) Now look what ye went an' done, Dan Chamberlain. Scared Edie away.

DAN. (*comes down c.*) Well, she didn't need to be afraid of me.

MRS. H. (L. c.) She wasn't afraid of ye, Dan, but a girl doesn't like t' hev her secrets known by th' person they concern most. But Dan, how's election comin'?

DAN. To tell you the truth, Mrs. Hazelton, I'm not awfully sure of winning. You know Squire Evans has been political boss of this county for years and it's going to be a hard fight to shake him from his position. But I'm going to fight, Mrs. Hazelton, and I'm going to do my best to win.

MRS. H. Well, I'll tell ye what, Dan, if th' women could vote ye'd win in a walk, an' then you an' Edith——

DAN. Why, Mrs. Hazelton, how did you guess?

MRS. H. Well, I wasn't born blind an' I haven't met with any accident t' my eyes. Go in an' win her Dan. (*crosses to steps*)

DAN (*works churn a couple of times*) But, Mrs. Hazelton, I haven't anything to offer her. I am poor as money goes.

MRS. H. (*comes back to c.*) But Dan, people who marry for money don't marry fer love. (*goes up steps*) But I've got t' be gittin' into th' house t' see ef Sally has broke any more o' my Chinaware while I've been gone. I'll send Edie out t' ye, Dan. (*laughs and exits into house*)

DAN. (*sits on bench L.*) I wonder if she really meant it. It seems too good to be true.

EDITH. (*shyly enters from house*) Hello, Dan.

DAN. (*smiles*) Hello, Edith.

EDITH. Did you want to see me Dan?

DAN. (*rises and crosses to c. During speech crosses to tree seat and sits*) Well, Edith, I must confess that I just dropped in to rest a moment, and I also must confess that I picked out this particular spot because I thought there might be more chance of seeing you than in any other spot. And now that I'm looking at you I want to tell you a little story that I've been keeping to myself for a long time. Won't you be seated? (*indicates tree seat*)

(EDITH *seats self on steps.*)

DAN. (*rises*) Over here. (*indicating tree seat again*)

(*Shy bus. For EDITH. She finally crosses to tree seat and sits.*)

DAN. Edith, we've known each other a long time.

EDITH. Yes, Dan.

DAN. Yes, Edith, ever since we were children

and I carried your books home from school for you. And ever since that time I've been dreaming.

EDITH. Dreaming, Dan?

DAN. Yes, dreaming. Dreaming of you.

EDITH. Of me?

DAN. Yes. Sometimes I have dreamed I was a king. And you were my queen. But all my dreams have been pleasant ones, Edith, and every one of them has been of you. And I've wanted those dreams to come true.

EDITH. To come true?

DAN. Yes, little girl, I've wanted you for ever so long. Now I'm after two things—the office of prosecuting attorney of Bradford county, and you; but of the two I want you the more. I love you, little girl. Will you be my wife? (*stretches out arms to EDITH*)

(*Enter GRACE from rear R. and comes through gate. Hears last sentence.*)

EDITH. (*rises and nestles into DAN's arms. Kisses DAN*) Yes, Dan. (*hides face on DAN's shoulder*)

(*GRACE approaches down c. and is noticed by EDITH, who breaks away from DAN.*)

(*EDITH goes R. c.*)

GRACE. (c.) I hope I've not intruded.

DAN. (*down*) Not at all. You're just in time to be the first to hear the good news.

GRACE. What good news?

DAN. I think I can tell it best by means of an introduction. (*crosses to R. c.*)

(*EDITH hangs head and turns away. DAN clasps her by hand.*)

DAN. Miss Evans, allow me to present to you Miss Edith Hazelton, who has promised to become Mrs. Dan Chamberlain.

GRACE. (*coldly*) Well, I'm sure I congratulate both of you. And now that this sentimental little scene is over, can you tell me if father is here?

EDITH. Why no. We haven't seen anything of him all day. Isn't he down at the court house watching the election?

GRACE. (*crosses down L.*) No. He and Mr. Gregory, his bookkeeper, started for the mill a short time ago, and I thought they might have stopped in.

DAN. (*crosses up to gate*) Well, I must be going now. Having won one prize to-day I must now look out for another. I'm sorry, Miss Evans, that it is your father who must suffer, but I'm going to do my very best to become prosecuting attorney of this county.

GRACE. It has been said that all's fair in love and war, and I'm sure it must be the same in politics. And if it isn't treason to my own kin I will say I wish you success.

DAN. (*comes down*) Thank you, Miss Evans. Such words of cheer coming from the camp of a rival should make any man ashamed to lose. But I must be going. (*takes EDITH's hand*) Good-bye, Edith. I hope to see you again to-night as the prosecuting attorney-elect. (*drops EDITH's hand and turns to leave, bows to GRACE*) Good-bye, Miss Evans. (*exit through gate R.*)

GRACE. (*turns to EDITH with expression of hate. Crosses to R. C.*) Edith Hazelton, I hate you.

EDITH. (*shrinks back in affright*) Why, Grace—

GRACE. Oh, there's no use mincing matters. You've robbed me of Dan Chamberlain, the man I love. Oh, I could see it coming. When you were nothing but a schoolgirl you set your cap for him, and ever since that time you've been trying to capture him. And now with the aid of your doll

face and your tricks you've done it. But you shan't have him. You shan't I say. Before I'd let you marry Dan Chamberlain I'd kill both of you. (*crosses down L.*)

ABNER. (*enters from house in time to hear last part of GRACE'S speech. ABNER wears apron and is wiping dish*) Good-night. This is no place for a detective. (*makes noise. Hurried exit through doorway*)

GRACE. (*turns to C.*) Why, what was that?

EDITH. Oh, only Abner. But Grace, you really don't hate me. Please Grace. (*holds out arms*) Tell me you didn't mean what you said.

GRACE. (*sneeringly*) Oh, I don't know whether I did or not. But when a girl sets her heart on anything and then is robbed of it by someone no better than herself, would it be anything out of the ordinary if she should lose her temper? (*goes up to gate. Controls anger by effort. Turns to EDITH*) But maybe I shouldn't have become so angry. I'm sorry, Edith. Good-bye. (*turns suddenly and passes through gate. Exit L.*)

EDITH. (*resumes tree seat*) Poor girl. I'm sure she didn't mean what she said. But I suppose I would have felt almost as badly if Dan had chosen her instead of me. But it makes me unhappy, and on the day which seemed to me but a moment ago the happiest in my whole life.

ABNER. (*peeks through doorway*) Is the war over?

EDITH. What war?

ABNER. (*comes out on porch*) Why, the one between you an' Grace Evans.

EDITH. Oh, Abner, you mustn't say that. There simply was a misunderstanding between Grace and I.

ABNER. But I heard her threaten to kill you an' Dan Chamberlain, and when anybody threatens to kill anybody else it's time fer th' International

Detectives' bureau t' be on th' job. (*polishes badge with bandanna handkerchief*)

EDITH. Well, Abner, I think you would better save your talent to catch a real murderer. Ab, what would you do if you were face to face with a real murderer?

ABNER. (*swells out chest*) Miss Edith, if I met a real murderer I'd jest go right up t' him an' grab him by th' collar an' shove one o' these in his ribs. (*opens coat and draws horsepistol from belt*) Members o' th' International Detectives' bureau are never cowards. Why, with one o' these in my hands I wouldn't be afraid of anybody on earth——

SALLY. (*enters from house*) Ab.

ABNER. (*attempts to replace revolver but drops it*) Aw, what?

SALLY. (*descends steps and picks up pistol*) Well, fer th' lan' sakes, Ab, what are ye doin'? Playin' Civil war?

ABNER. Certainly not. Don't all detectives carry revolvers?

SALLY. Sure, but there ain't been a detective in this town fer six years— Not since th' post-office was robbed.

ABNER (*swells up chest and polishes badge with handkerchief*) There hasn't? What's th' matter with me?

SALLY. I give et up.

ABNER. Aw, Sal.

EDITH. I think I will leave you two to fight it out. (*approaches house. Turns to AB*) Have courage, Ab. Remember, a member of the International Detectives' bureau never dodges danger. (*exit into house*)

SALLY. Now Ab, I'll give ye yer horsepistol, an' I want ye t' take et back t' th' second-hand store where ye got et. You wasn't cut out fer a detective. (*hands pistol to ABNER*)

ABNER. (*reluctantly*) Well, ef ye say so, Sal, I s'pose——

SALLY. Ye needn't do any s'posin'. You jest take et back. Yer too young t' play with dangerous weapons like thet. Ye might git hurt.

ABNER. Would ye care, Sal?

SALLY. Of course I'd care.

ABNER. Aw, Sal. (*bashful bus.*)

SALLY. I'd care if anybody got hurt.

ABNER. (*disgustedly*) Thet's right. Ye never give me any encouragement. A feller never gits a chance——

SALLY. Well, you'll hev a chance.

ABNER. (*brightens up*) D'ye mean et, Sal?

SALLY. Sure. Ye'll hev a chance t' go t' th' hospital ef ye don't quit fooling with thet Revolutionary war relic. Now you take et into th' house an' put et away.

ABNER. (*approaches house, then turns to SALLY*) I'll put et up, Sal, but you stay out here. I got somethin' I want t' say t' ye. (*exit into house*)

SALLY. (*crosses to bench by churn and takes seat*) Jest as if I didn't know why he wanted me t' wait. He's goin' t' take another peek in thet book he's got on how t' make love. I heared him recitin' some of et th' other day when he didn't know I was listenin'. Why, he'd be a scream in a vaudeville show. No man ever wins my heart by makin' love th' way he studied et in a ten cent book. I'll fix him. (*ABNER enters from house*)

SALLY. (*smooths out skirts*) Well, what did ye want t' say, Ab? Hev ye got a clew t' th' feller thet's been stealin' our chickens?

ABNER. (*descends steps and crosses to SALLY*) Better then thet, Sal. I've got somethin' serious t' say t' ye.

SALLY. What's th' matter? Ye ain't sick, be ye?

ABNER. Not exactly. But I've got an empty feelin here. (*places hand upon heart*)

SALLY. Never mind, Ab, supper is ready an' all we're waitin' fer is Mister Hazelton.

ABNER. Now Sal, you jest give me a chance t' say what I want to. Et ain't hunger thet's botherin' me.

SALLY. No? Well, go ahead then. What air ye waitin' fer?

ABNER. (*gets down on knees*) Sally, I'm in love. Beautiful girl, since first we met ye hev held first position in my heart. Ye air th' apple of my eye——

SALLY. What kind of an apple, Ab?

ABNER. Russet apple— Now Sal, stop yer jokin'.

SALLY. Well, go ahead. Apple of my eye. What next?

ABNER. You air th' apple of my eye. When first I saw you, your beautiful face and yer charmin' manner won my heart. Ye hev been with me in my dreams. Wakin' er sleepin'——

SALLY. Mostly sleepin'——

ABNER. Mostly sleepin'— No, not mostly sleepin'. Now you look here Sal, you git me all rattled. Will you keep still a minute an' let me finish this?

SALLY. Yes, you poor boy. Go ahead.

ABNER. Ye air with me in my wakin' an' sleepin' hours. I dream of your—your—your——

SALLY. Of what?

ABNER. Of your—jest a minute. (*pulls book from hip pocket and lays it on floor behind him. Turns around and reads*)—of your—your time hes come, Frog Faced Leary and now you die. And the next moment Daredevil Dan was in conflict with the renegade an' his band o' redskins.

SALLY. (*rises. Speaks angrily*) Well, ef thet's th' way ye make love, you've got a sense of humor thet should land you th' prize job on th' Undertakers' Weekly. Good-night. (*marches scornfully into the house*)

ABNER. (*rises. Picks up book. Takes seat on*

steps. Looks at book. Reads) Daredevil Dan In Wyoming, or the Renegade's Revenge. (*speaks*) Durned ef I didn't git th' wrong book. (*collapses*)

SALLY. (*enters from house. Throws book at ABNER*) There's th' other book, Ab.

ABNER. (*rises and picks up book. Places it in pocket*) Well, I've gone an' spoiled et all. I guess th' feller who wrote thet novel wasn't thinkin' of makin' love t' women. Now Jim Hewitt says when a feller feels blue a good smoke'll generally fix him up all right. (*looks about*) I'm goin' t' see ef et works. (*pulls cigar from pocket and looks at it*) Jim said this was a good cigar. Well— (*seats self on bench and lights cigar. Business of smoking and getting sick Ad. Lib.*) The barn is a good place to die. Farewell. (*exit into barn*)

RUBEN. (*enters from L. Passes through gate. Evidently slightly intoxicated. Walks to bench. Sits down. Places head on hands*) Down an' out. Thet's what he said. An' him only a cheap bartender thet I wouldn't hev looked at two years ago. An' he told me I'm down an' out.

MRS. H. (*enters from house*) So, there ye are. (*descends steps and crosses to RUBEN*) An' where hev ye been all day? Oh, ye needn't answer. One look at ye tells th' whole story.

RUBEN. Oh, Martha, don't.

MRS. H. Well, I'm goin' t' jest th' same. Here I've been huntin' fer ye all afternoon an' couldn't find ye. (*changes tone*) Ruben, why do ye do et? Ye used t' be so good an' kind before ye lost yer money in minin' stock. Me an' Edie ain't ashamed of ye, Rube, jest because ye ain't so well off as ye used t' be. Why don't ye quit, Rube?

RUBEN. Ye don't know what yer askin', Martha. I can't do et. Since th' squire cheated me out o' th' proceeds o' th' grist mill, et seems as if all th' trouble in th' whole world is loaded onto my

shoulders, an' th' burden is too big t' carry without help.

MRS. H. Well, now, Rube, let me tell ye somethin'. Dan Chamberlain is in love with Edie an' I shouldn't be surprised ef them two would git married right away ef Dan is elected prosecutor.

RUBEN. Well, I haven't any objection thet I know of. Dan is a good boy an' would make a son-in-law thet any man might be proud of.

MRS. H. Ye bet he would, but would you, Rube Hazelton, make a father-in-law of which such a son-in-law could be proud? Tell me thet.

RUBEN. (*shakes his head*) Oh, I don't know. Why do ye torture me, Martha? Can't ye see I suffer enough from th' shame an' disgrace without havin' my wife turned against me, too? I've tried t' let liquor alone, but when I do I can feel it beckonin' t' me from every direction.

MRS. H. But supper is ready. We've been waitin' fer ye.

RUBEN. I don't want any supper. When ye go in send Edie out. She's th' best comforter I've got.

MRS. H. All right. (*in softer tone*) But ye better come in t' supper, Rube. I'm rather sorry I spoke t' ye so harsh, but cheer up. (*pats him on shoulder*) Every cloud has a silver linin' an' things may come out some day jest th' way we would want 'em to. (*turns and starts toward house*) But I'll send Edie out t' ye. Next t' th' liquor she has th' most influence over ye. (*exits into house*)

RUBEN. I guess she's right. Liquor hez got th' most influence over me. But et's my very life blood. I can't git along without et. Ef I quit it I'll die without it an' if I don't quit it th' stuff will kill me. There's no choice. (*shakes head sadly*)

EDITH. (*enters from house. Walks to side of father and kneels*) Why, daddy, what's the matter?

RUBEN. (*places hand on EDITH's head and strokes*

her hair) I was jest thinkin' Edie. I guess th' blue devils has got me. An' Edie yer th' only one that kin drive 'em away.

EDITH. Oh, father, if you only could let the drink alone there wouldn't be any blue devils.

RUBEN. (*clasps hands between knees and looks down*) Thet's jest it, Edie. Et's easy enough t' say let et alone, but et's a mighty sight harder t' follow advice then t' give it. Edie, girl—(*places hand on her head again*)—when I haven't got th' drink in me I feel dead an' cold. Et puts fire into my brain, Edie. Et tells my brain t' do things. But oh, what's th' use? (*places hands in pockets and looks away from EDITH*) We've talked et over erough an' nothin' has come of et. I hold Squire Evans responsible. Before I lost my money I wouldn't touch th' stuff. Now I can't leave et alone. (*rises and starts toward gate*)

EDITH. (*rises*) Why, father, where are you going?

RUBEN. Jest down street, Edie.

EDITH. Please don't go, father, for I know you'll go to the saloon. (*holds out arms*) Won't you promise me not to go? Please, please, father. I know it's a hard fight, but you can win if you try.

RUBEN. (*turns to EDITH*) Well, Edie, ye've made me change my mind. I'm goin' down street. A man never won th' battle by shunnin' th' enemy. I'm goin' t' seek out th' enemy an' I'm goin' t' win.

EDITH. (*starts toward him*) Oh, father, I'm so glad to hear you say such things.

RUBEN. An' I mean every word of et, too.

EDITH. (*holds out hand impulsively*) Go, father, and my prayers go with you.

RUBEN. (*clasps EDITH's hand*) I'm going, daughter, but with God's help. (*raises arm as if taking oath*) I'll come home sober. (*drops EDITH's hand and makes hurried exit through gate and off L.*)

EDITH. (*stands with arms on gatepost gazing in direction taken by RUBEN*) Oh, I do hope he can keep his word. It would seem just like the old days when he was so good to us. Oh, I hope Dan will win.

SQUIRE. (*enters R.*) Young lady, you're wishin' fer th' impossible.

EDITH. (*turns quickly. Goes down R. c.*) Why, squire, I didn't know you were near or perhaps I wouldn't have poken so loudly.

SQUIRE. (*down L. c.*) Oh, that's all right. Jest keep on wishin' as much as ye like. I don't believe et will do Dan any good. I'm goin' t' succeed myself as prosecutin' attorney.

EDITH. But squire, you've already held the office four terms. Don't you think it would be the right thing to turn it over to a younger man?

SQUIRE. No, I can't say as I do. Et isn't younger blood that's needed in public office. Et's experience. Of course Dan is pretty good fer a young lawyer, but he doesn't understand th' ways o' politics an' I'm afraid he hasn't got a chance.

EDITH. (*turns as if to go into house*) Well, squire, supper is waiting. Will you join us? (*walks toward house*)

SQUIRE. No, Edie, I jest stopped in t' rest fer a minute. My heart has been botherin' me a great deal lately an' th' exertion o' electioneerin' has nigh tuckered me out. I'll jest sit down here, ef ye don't mind. (*takes tree seat*)

EDITH. I hope you'll be better soon, but I must go.

SQUIRE. Don't go, Edie. I've got somethin' I want t' tell ye.

EDITH. (*seats self on steps*) Well.

SQUIRE. (*pokes at ground with cane. Looks down*) Now Edie, I ain't as young as I used t' be, but I'm not so old as I might be, either, and sometimes I seem t' feel like a youth again.

EDITH. But what has that to do with me, Squire?

SQUIRE. (*looks up*) I'm jest comin' t' thet. I ain't in th' habit o' wastin' words an' I ain't goin' t' begin now. I've got a business proposition t' make t' ye.

EDITH. Well.

SQUIRE. (*rises*) Edie, I want ye t' be my wife.

EDITH. (*rises*) What? Why, squire, you must be joking. You are old enough to be my father.

SQUIRE. But not old enough, Edie, t' forgit thet I'm alive an' that I ain't ready t' give up all o' life's pleasures an' ambitions. Now, Edie, your folks haven't got much. Ye don't have fine clothes like ye ought t' have. When ye go anywhere ye have t' walk because yer father can't afford t' keep a carriage. Ye'd like t' travel, but ye can't. Ye sigh fer all th' pretty things thet make a girl's life happy, but ye know they're out o' yer reach. Now, I've got plenty o' money. I probably won't live an awful long time. I've got a fine home but et seems empty without a wife. Dan Chamberlain can't provide you with a fine home, a carriage, servants, an' take ye on furrin' trips. I can——

EDITH. (*stepping toward squire*) Squire, you must stop. Why, you should be ashamed of yourself. You drove one wife to the grave with your stinginess and now you ask me to take her place. I've promised to marry Dan Chamberlain because I love him. I couldn't love you if you were to bring me the wealth of Monte Cristo. I've lived in this village too long not to know you for what you are: A keen, hard, grasping business man whose love for gold would outweigh the love for a wife. I have chosen to give all my love to one man, and that man is not you, Squire Evans.

SQUIRE. Well, maybe ye'll change yer mind. When I set my heart on anything I generally git it. I want you an' maybe before I git through with ye

ye'll beg me t' grant ye what I now offer of my own free will.

EDITH. I don't think that time ever will come, Squire Evans. I'm sure I would rather go without than ever ask you for anything. Now that you have my decision—I must be going? You'll pardon—(*turns toward house again*)—me for leaving you, but I'm sure you have too much gallantry to make love to a woman who is promised to another. (*exit EDITH into house R.*)

SQUIRE. (*sits on bench L.*) So she's accepted Dan Chamberlain. Well, I suspected all along thet she would. But they ain't married yet, an' there's many a slip between th' cup an' th' lip. Maybe there'll be a slip somewhere in this case.

ABNER. (*enters from barn L. Holds stomach. Crosses to R. C.*) Somebody has said thet sleep is a cousin t' death, but I'll bet thet smokin' a good cigar is th' twin brother to et. Oh, but wait 'till I git hold o' Jim Hewitt. (*sees squire*) Why, hallo, squire.

SQUIRE. What's thet, ye young scamp? Don't ye know enough t' say "Mister" when yer speakin' t' me?

ABNER. Say, squire, I don't recognize any o' th' social formalities. That cigar knocked 'em all out o' me.

SQUIRE. Cigar? What cigar? Well, ef thet ain't th' biggest joke. (*laughs*)

ABNER. Thet's right. Go ahead an' laugh. A feller thet's stingy enough t' smoke a corncob pipe don't know what et is t' git sick on a good cigar.

SALLY. (*enters from house*) Oh, there ye are.

ABNER. Yep. Here I be.

SALLY. I've been lookin' all over fer ye. Supper is almost over.

ABNER. Supper. (*places hand to stomach and groans*) Oh, Lord.

SALLY. Yes, supper. We've got some of the nicest beef stew with th' grease——

ABNER. (*gulps*) Oh, Sally, oh, please.

SALLY. (*descends steps*) Well, what on earth is th' matter with ye?

SQUIRE. Abner has been enjoying a *good* cigar.

SALLY. (*turns to squire*) Why, howdy do, Squire Evans. I didn't see ye in th' dusk. Cigar? (*turns to ABNER*) Well, Ab, of all th' fool things ye ever did. You jest come into th' house an' I'll give ye some soda t' settle yer stomach. Come on, now. (*exit SALLY into house*)

ABNER. (*groans and exit into house*)

SQUIRE. Ef I only could find some way t' break et off. Ef I could only git her t' believe he wasn't true t' her. I wish I could find some way t'——

GRACE. (*enter from R. passes through gate. Approaches Squire in time to hear last sentence*) To what, father?

SQUIRE. T' beat Dan Chamberlain.

GRACE. (*comes down c.*) But you are to be prosecuting attorney, aren't you?

SQUIRE. Oh, it ain't politics, but love thet's botherin' me.

GRACE. What? You in love? With whom?

SQUIRE. I didn't intend t' tell ye, Gracie, but I s'pose I might as well. I've been proposin' t' Edie.

GRACE. Well, you certainly have a nerve for a man of your age.

SQUIRE. But why shouldn't I love her? Why shouldn't I possess her? She wants fine clothes an' a fine home. I can give 'em to her.

GRACE. (*thinks a moment. Aside*) The very thing. (*crosses to SQUIRE. Aloud*) What did she say?

SQUIRE. She said she's goin' t' marry Dan Chamberlain.

GRACE. Yes, and I hate her.

SQUIRE. Oh, so thet's th' way th' wind blows.

GRACE. (*crosses R.*) Yes it is if you want to know it. And if we work together we may both be

able to achieve our objects. I've been thinking matters over and I have a plan.

SQUIRE. (*crosses to L. c.*) What is et?

GRACE. (*crosses back to R. c.*) Well, you be here when Dan Chamberlain comes again and I'll show you. But I must go now. (*crosses up c.*) Edith and I quarreled about it this afternoon and I couldn't face her now and keep my hands off her. (*exit GRACE through gate L.*)

SQUIRE. (*crosses down L.*) I hope whatever her plan is it works. If et succeeds as well as th' plan I worked t' git Rube Hazelton's money et'll be all right. If anyone ever gits into thet safe o' mine—Oh, well, what's th' use o' worryin'? Nothin' like thet kin happen.

EDITH. (*enter from house*) Why, squire, not gone yet?

SQUIRE. (*crosses to c.*) No, I've been thinkin'. I want ye t' change yer mind, Edie, about what ye said awhile ago.

EDITH. That's something I never will do.

SQUIRE. Well, maybe ye will when ye know certain things.

EDITH. (*descends steps*) What things, Squire Evans? Explain y'ourself.

SQUIRE. Well, I ain't goin' t' do any explainin' jest now.

EDITH. Squire Evans I want to know what you mean.

SQUIRE. Well, maybe I ain't tellin' all I know. But one thing I know, an' thet is thet I'm in love with ye. (*rises*) An' I'm goin' t' hev ye, too.

EDITH. (*draws back*) Squire, you forget yourself.

SQUIRE. (*advances*) I forgit everything except thet I want ye—

EDITH. (*turns toward house*) I'll not stay to hear any more of such talk. (*goes R.*)

(*Squire grasps her hand.*)

(*Enter RUBEN from L. in rear. RUBEN is intoxicated.*)

EDITH. Squire Evans, I demand that you release me at once.

SQUIRE. Well, I guess not.

RUBEN. (*approaches them*) Well, I guess yes. (*grasps squire by shoulder and hurls him down L.*)

SQUIRE. (*rises and brushes himself*) Ye'll pay fer thet, Rube Hazelton. Yer drunk.

RUBEN. Maybe I am drunk, but not too drunk t' git th' best of a crook an' scoundrel like you.

(*EDITH stands at R. C. with clasped hands.*)

SQUIRE. (*up to c.*) Crook? Scoundrel? Why, what d'ye mean?

RUBEN. Jest what I said. Ye robbed me o' my money an' now yer even enterin' my dooryard an' insultin' my daughter.

SQUIRE. Et's th' liquor in ye thet makes ye say such things. When yer sober ye'll know better.

RUBEN. Yes, maybe et is th' liquor. But who's responsible? Who drove me t' drink? You, with yer schemes fer gittin' rich quick. You, with yer smooth talk about th' wealth in mines. (*louder*) When I think of et— (*advances upon SQUIRE*) I want t' kill ye. T' kill ye, d'ye hear? Right now my brain burns as if it is on fire. My veins are filled with burnin' brimstone straight from hell. (*louder*) I want t' kill ye, an' by heaven I'm goin' t' do et.

EDITH. (*steps in between them and places arms about RUBEN's neck*) Father, father, Oh——

(*RUBEN disengages EDITH's arms and throws her down R. SQUIRE attempts to run into barn L., but trips over wood and falls.*)

RUBEN. (*follows SQUIRE and grasps axe*)
Pray, you cur, fer yer time has come.

EDITH. (*rushing toward gate*) Help! Help!
Oh, will no one help?

DAN. (*enters from L., passes through gate and grasps axe as it is about to fall*) For heaven's sake, Rube, what does this mean?

RUBEN. (*wipes forehead with coat sleeve*) I don't know. I must hev been crazy. But when th' drink is in a man reason is out. (*staggers toward gate*) Yer all against me. Et's comfort I want. I want liquor, th' cure fer all trouble. (*lunges through gate*) My brain is burnin' up. I kin see blood an' I want t' kill. T' kill. (*exit L. with axe*)

EDITH. Oh, Dan, I'm afraid.

DAN. Don't be afraid, little girl. (*extends arms and embraces EDITH. To SQUIRE*) You can get up now, Squire.

SQUIRE. (*rises and brushes clothes*) Well, I guess I'd better be gittin' on. One experience like thet is plenty.

DAN. Oh, by the way, Squire, there's a light in the mill office. I noticed it as I passed.

SQUIRE. Yes, Gregory said he was goin' t' work on th' books to-night.

DAN. But I should think he would be rather afraid to work up there on the river bank where tramps are likely to happen along at any time.

SQUIRE. Oh, he ain't afraid. Gregory is a brave man an' he's jest as valuable as he is brave. (*starts for gate*) But I guess I'll be gittin' on.

EDITH. (*leaves DAN's embrace*) I'm sorry for what happened, Squire.

SQUIRE. (*passes through gate. Turns L.*) Oh, thet's all right. Rube was drunk or he wouldn't hev done et. Good-night.

DAN. Good-night, Squire. I'll be up to the courthouse in a short time to hear the election returns.

SQUIRE. Well, ye might as well stay away fer all th' good they'll do ye.

DAN. Let me tell you, Squire Evans, if the count is honest you'll have the hardest time getting elected you ever had in your life.

SQUIRE. (*approaches gate and stands in it*) Thet don't bother me at all. Et ain't afraid o' gettin' defeated thet worries me, but of what Rube Hazelton may do. But I've got a revolver right here in my hip pocket thet says he won't do nothin' t' me. Good-night. (*exits L.*)

EDITH. (*takes DAN'S arm and two walk toward steps*). Oh, I'm so sorry, Dan.

DAN. Don't worry, little girl. Your father's temper will soon leave him and the squire wouldn't dare fire a revolver for fear of shooting himself.

EDITH. But, Dan, suppose they should meet.

DAN. They aren't going to meet. Now, you go into the house and I'll go down street and see if I can find your father. Maybe I can persuade him to come home peaceably.

EDITH. (*ascends steps clasps hands and faces DAN*) Oh, I hope you can. Hurry, won't you, Dan? (*turns to door and is about to exit*)

DAN. Edith, aren't you forgetting something?

EDITH. (*turns toward DAN*) What? (*pause*) Oh, Dan. (*descends steps quickly. Rushes up to DAN and kisses him. Turns quickly and rushes into house*)

DAN. (*walks to gate and stands in it. Faces audience*) I wonder if ever another man was so fortunate as I am at the present moment? Dan Chamberlain, you certainly are a lucky fellow.

GRACE. (*enters L. U. E. Greatly agitated*) Oh, Dan.

DAN. (*turns suddenly L.*) What is it, Grace?

GRACE. (*staggers toward him*) Help me, Dan. I believe I've sprained my ankle.

DAN. (*places arm about GRACE'S shoulders and*

helps her to tree seat L. Then goes R.) I hope it's nothing serious, Grace.

GRACE. But I'm afraid it is. I was walking up the river bank when I saw Mr. Hazelton and he was drunk and I ran. I tripped over a tree root and fell.

(DAN crosses to GRACE. Stands by her. Then bends over her.)

(EDITH enters from house. Stands on porch and gazes at DAN and GRACE.)

GRACE. *(sees EDITH. Aside)* Here's my chance. *(throws arms about DAN's neck and kisses him)*

EDITH. *(places hand to heart and staggers into house)*

DAN. *(disengages GRACE's arms and starts back)* Why, Miss Evans, what is the meaning of this?

GRACE. *(hysterically)* Oh, I don't know, Dan. I must have been crazy. But I'm so frightened. Mr. Hazelton seemed so terrible. Oh, Dan, forgive me.

DAN. Never mind. There's no great harm done. But come. I will assist you to your home. *(places arm about GRACE's shoulders. Both walk through gate L.)*

(EDITH enters from house and sees GRACE and DAN leaving. Descends steps and walks to gate. Places arms upon gatepost and buries face in arms.)

SALLY. *(enters from house)* Why what's th' matter, Miss Edie? *(walks to EDITH and places hand upon her shoulder)* Why, Miss Edie, yer cryin'. What's th' matter?

EDITH. *(arouses herself by an effort and brushes handkerchief across her eyes)* Nothing, Sally.

SALLY. Yes, there is, Miss Edie. Girls don't cry fer nothin'. Hev you an' Dan been scrappin'?

EDITH. Oh, Sally, don't.

SALLY. Now, Miss Edie, you jest come right into th' house. (*takes EDITH's hand and leads her down R.*) An' hev a good cry, an' ye'll feel a heap sight better. In th' meantime ye kin read Ab's book on how t' make love. (*exit SALLY and EDITH into house*)

(*Red light is burned off stage L.*)

SQUIRE. (*enters hurriedly L. U. E. Greatly agitated. Looks around furtively as if afraid he is followed. Holds hand to heart and staggers to bench by churn L.*) Excitement will be th' death o' me yet. With Dan Chamberlain elected prosecutor by a comfortable majority and Edie promisin' t' be his wife, I don't know of any more disappointments that could come right now. Oh—(*places hand to heart again*)

(*Church bell rings.*)

(*Cries of "fire, fire" off stage L.*)

DAN. (*enters right, passes through gate, comes down L.*) Squire it's the mill. It's burning. I've been looking everywhere for you.

(*Enter MRS. H. and EDITH from house.*)

MRS. H. (*partly descends steps*) Dan. Squire. What is it? Where's th' fire?

DAN. (*crosses to R. C.*) It's the squire's mill Mrs. Hazelton, and I'm afraid it can't be saved.

(*Cries of fire, fire, off stage L.*)

ABNER. (*enters from house*) Gee, a fire. I'm goin'. (*starts on run for gate*)

SALLY. (*enters from house*) Abner Judkins.

ABNER. (*turns*) Aw, what?

SALLY. Wait fer me. (*runs to AB, takes his hand and both exit through gate and to L.*)

MRS. H. But why ain't ye t' th' fire, Dan?

DAN. Because I've news that can't wait. Mrs. Hazelton. Edith. I've been elected.

SQUIRE. Let me congratulate ye.

(*Sounds of muttering heard off stage L.*)

MRS. H. Why what is thet? (*runs to gate and looks L.*) Why, et's Sheriff Higgins an' he's got a prisoner.

EDITH. (*descends steps*) Why, who is it, mother?

MRS. H. I can't see. Yes, I can. My God, et's Rube. (*staggers down stage a few steps*)

EDITH. (*rushes to gate. Places arms about mother*)

DAN. (*crosses to L. C.*)

(*SHERIFF and ABNER enter. SHERIFF takes position just inside gate. DAN crosses R. C. SQUIRE rises and stands by bench R.*)

DAN. What's the trouble sheriff? I thought you knew better than to arrest Rube Hazelton for being drunk.

SHERIFF. (*advances C. with RUBE*) Drunk, did ye say? Drunk? Et's worse then thet.

DAN. Worse than that? For heaven's sake sheriff, speak. What is it?

SHERIFF. Murder.

MRS. H. (*R. C.*) Murder? Sheriff say ye lie. Ruben, tell him he's a liar. Oh, Dan.

RUBEN. (*hangs head. Straightens up and extends arms*) I ain't guilty. Oh, Martha, Edie, I tell ye I didn't do et. Dan. Don't stand there an' look at me like thet. I tell ye I didn't do et. I——

EDITH. Oh, sheriff, what are you saying? Who has been murdered?

SHERIFF. George Gregory, bookkeeper at th' mill. We found him dead in th' mill office with his skull crushed in with a hatchet. When we got there Rube was jest leavin' with th' blood-stained hatchet in his hand. He was yellin' "blood, blood," an' th' mill office was saturated with kerosene oil. Rube Hazelton killed George Gregory durin' a drunken frenzy an' then set fire t' th' mill t' cover up his crime.

EDITH. (*down R. Holds out arms*) Oh, father, father.

RUBEN. (*goes right. Falls into EDITH's arms*) I ain't guilty.

SQUIRE. But who kin prove et?

EZRA. (*enters L. U. E. Running, passes through gate and down c.*) I kin. Yes, I kin. I went fishin' down by th' mill this afternoon an' fell asleep right under th' office window. I was woke by a scuffle an' th' man who killed George Gregory is——

(SQUIRE shoots. EZRA quietly collapses.)

DAN. (*rushes to side of EZRA and kneels*) Squire Evans, if that boy is dead you'll swing for it, just as sure as I'm the new prosecuting attorney of Bradford county.

CURTAIN.

First Curtain.

RUBEN—(1)

EDITH—(2)

MRS. H.—(3)

SHERIFF—(7)

EZRA—(8)

DAN—(9)

SQUIRE—(10)

Second Curtain

SHERIFF and RUBE at Gate

GRACE and SQUIRE off

MRS. H. at Door sobbing

DAN (c.), arms toward EDITH

EDITH at Steps

SALLY and ABNER off.

Setting Act 2.

A—Wardrobe with top loose

B—Table

C—Roll-top desk

D—Hall rack

E—Doors

EX—Barred door

F—Rack with keys

G—Barred window

H—Map

I—Chair

ACT II.

(SHERIFF is discovered at desk smoking and reading newspaper.)

SHERIFF. (*throws paper upon desk*) Some editors hev'n't got any more regard fer th' libel laws then some folks hev fer th' ten commandments. Accordin' t' th' Bugle's report Rube Hazelton is as good as hanged. But I guess th' editor ain't takin' so many chances after all. Rube's ready t' confess right now an' there ain't one chance in a million fer him t' escape th' gallows. (*rises and looks around*) Whew. Gosh, what a smell. (*goes to chair and picks up coat*) Whew. (*carries coat to wardrobe.*

Holds nose with one hand and holds coat extended at arm's length with other) Th' next time I go huntin' skunks in th' cellar I'll wear a rubber overcoat. Whew. *(places coat in wardrobe)* There, thet's out o' th' way. But Oh, Lord what a smell. Et's a darn good thing th' winders air open.

(ABNER *enters through door R. and advances down C.*)

SHERIFF. Hello, Ab, what are ye all dressed up fer?

ABNER. Aw, darn et, et's Sally's fault. I either got t' wear my Sunday best er go naked.

SHERIFF. Sally's fault? Why how's thet?

ABNER. Well, ye see, Ezra an' I got into a little scuffle on th' day o' th' murder an' I went swimmin' in a tub o' water. Sally promised t' press my pants an' got t' thinkin' o' somethin' else an' left a hot flatiron standin' on th' seat of 'em. Thet spelled farewell t' my second best.

SHERIFF. *(laughs)* Thet's bad. But what did ye do t' git even with Sally?

ABNER. Nuthin'. Why I could forgive thet girl anything.

SHERIFF. Oh. *(takes seat at desk)*

ABNER. Yes, an' when Rube Hazelton gits out o' jail I'm goin' t' marry her.

SHERIFF. Well, th' only thing liable t' spoil yer bright future is th' fact thet Rube Hazelton ain't goin' t' git out o' jail. Ef ye was as sure o' marryin' Sally as I am thet Rube Hazelton will be hanged yer prospects would be a good deal brighter.

ABNER. *(sits on table L.)* Oh, so th' squire has got ye on his side, too. Well, th' squire is darned lucky he ain't over there behind thet barred door with Rube Hazelton. Ef thet bullet o' his had gone a half inch t' th' left Ezra would be dead instead o' wanderin' aroun' with no more sense then a rag doll.

SHERIFF. Don't ye think Ezra will recover his mind again?

ABNER. (*gets off table. Comes c.*) Well, I don't know. Dr. Burton says th' bullet grazed his head in such a way thet th' shock affected his brain. He doesn't hold out much hope thet Ezra ever'll know as much as he did before th' shootin'.

SHERIFF. But th' squire says et was an accident, an' ain't he doin' a lot fer Ezra because he's sorry fer what happened?

ABNER. Oh, I know all th' folks believe et was an accident an' they do say thet th' way Rube tried t' kill him with an axe an' then raved aroun' hollerin' fer blood was enough t' set his nerves on edge an' make him shoot. Et might hev been an accident, sheriff, but I'll be gol darned ef I believe et was.

SHERIFF. An' why don't ye believe et, Ab?

ABNER. (*showing badge*) Well, sheriff, members o' th' International Detectives' bureau hev t' be suspicious o' everybody. Thet's part o' their business. An' thet's jest what I come t' see ye about.

SHERIFF. Well, what did ye want t' see me about?

ABNER. (*draws nearer. Whispers*) I want t' be a deputy sheriff.

SHERIFF. (*laughs heartily. AB draws away to c.*) You one o' my deputies? (*laughs again. Rises and crosses to c.*) Well, ef thet ain't th' limit. What do ye want t' be a deputy fer when ye belong t' th' International Detectives' bureau?

ABNER. (L. c.) Well, ye see, sheriff, et's like this. Of course us members of th' International Detectives' bureau (*opens coat and displays badge*) has lots o' privileges, but we ain't got any right t' carry revolvers. Now, I don't want t' git picked up—

SHERIFF. (R. c.) Well, Ab, I don't need any more deputies, but ef yer thinkin' o' carryin' those rusty ol' horsepistols ye've got on now, go ahead.

I don't believe I'll arrest ye fer thet. If ye ever succeed in shootin' one of 'em off, which is impossible, ye wouldn't be liable t' hurt anybody but yerself. Go ahead.

ABNER. Thank ye, sheriff. Ye see Sally won't marry me unless I solve th' mystery, an' I'll need a gun when I meet th' real murderer.

SHERIFF. I guess th' real murderer is safe from ye so long as he's behind them bars over there. (*points to barred door L. Crosses down*)

ABNER. (C.) Hev yer own way, sheriff, but before I git through them bars will open fer Rube Hazelton, fer I'm goin' t' prove he's an innocent man.

SALLY. (*opens door R. and enters in time to hear last part of sentence. Slaps AB on back. AB winces*) Bully fer you, Ab Judkins. Them words do ye credit.

SHERIFF. (*crosses L. and gets keys off board*) Well, Ab, I've got t' go into th' cell room, so I'll leave ye here with Sally. Remember yer an international detective an' guard th' door carefully. Don't let anybody break into this jail who hadn't ought t' be in here. (*laughs and exits L.*)

SALLY. (*scats self in chair at desk*) Well, Ab, hev ye got any clews?

ABNER. (C.) Clews? Yep, I got a lot of 'em, but darn et, Sal, I can't do no good work on this case.

SALLY. Why not?

ABNER. I'm too durned busy thinkin' about you.

SALLY. About me?

ABNER. (*crosses to chair. Kneels and takes SALLY'S hand*) You guessed et. Aw, Sal, why don't ye marry me now an' let me solve th' mystery afterwards?

SALLY. (*rises, pushes AB'S hand away. He falls C. and SALLY comes down a little R.*) Abner Judkins hev you got th' nerve t' talk love t' me when

I'm so near distracted that I don't know where I'm at? What with Rube Hazelton in jail and Miss Edith cryin' her eyes out fer Dan Chamberlain an' too proud t' let him hev a chance t' explain, an' Ezra losin' his memory——

ABNER. (*remains sitting c.*) I guess yer thinkin' most about Ezra.

SALLY. (*grows angry*) Now, you look here, Ab Judkins. Don't you go t' gettin' jealous o' Ezra.

ABNER. (*also grows angry. Rises*) Aw, who's gettin' jealous? (*crosses to SALLY shaking head in her face*)

SALLY. (*puts hands under AB's nose and backs him up stage toward table*) You are, an' jest let me tell you right now that I won't stand fer et. (*crosses down R. again*)

ABNER. (*up C. L.*) Oh, ye won't?

SALLY. No, I won't, Ab Judkins, an' ef yer goin' t' start in t' be boss o' me before I even consented t' marry ye ye kin consider yerself an outcast. Ye kin find another girl.

ABNER. (*comes down c.*) Well, that would be easy enough. I kin make love——

SALLY. No, ye can't.

ABNER. Why can't I? (*comes closer to SALLY down R.*)

SALLY. Because ye lost yer book. (*laughs*)

ABNER. (*tears hair. Very angry*) Thet's right. Laugh. Drive me t' desperation. Go on. Tell me ye hate me.

SALLY. Well, I do hate ye then, an' I won't marry ye, Abner Judkins. (*picks up skirts, tilts head in air, crosses AB and goes up c. toward door*)

ABNER. (*follows her with eyes. Turns around, which leaves him c. on next speech*) Sally.

SALLY. (*loudly*) What? (*turns*)

ABNER. (*jumps*) Is this so long or good-bye?

SALLY. GOOD-BYE. (*exits. Time it so door slams at word "bye."*)

ABNER. (*bawls very loudly*) Now look what I've gone an' done. Hed a fight with th' best girl in th' world. Darn et, why can't th' course o' true love run smooth. I wish I hed th' nerve t' commit suicide, but no more cigars to drive dull care away. Darn et, why—(*pauses a moment. Goes to desk R.*) I'll do et. I'll make Sal think I've committed suicide, an' see ef she's sorry. Et's th' very thing. (*searches desk and gets writing paper, pen and ink. Bites end of pen*) Now what will I say? Oh, yes. (*writes*) Misguided girl. (*looks up*) No, thet won't do. I've got t' show her thet I thought a lot of her when I died. Now what's th' best way t' start this off? I've got et. (*writes again*) Fair, but cruel girl. You have seen fit t' spurn my love, th' love of an honest heart which beats true even though it beats beneath a—(*looks up again*) beats beneath a what? (*bites pen again*) Oh—(*writes again*) a homespun shirt—(*looks up again*) I guess thet ought t' hit her. (*writes again*) Heaven only knows how I loved ye. (*looks up again*) Gittin' better every minute. (*writes again*) When I am dead jest remember thet I chose th' grave in preference t' livin' an' knowin' ye had turned me down. An' when ye find my body jest press one kiss on my dead lips fer remembrance. Farewell—Abner. (*reads note over*) I guess thet'll fix her. An' when she finds out I ain't dead she'll fall into my arms. Now fer an envelope. (*searches desk, finds envelope, places note inside and addresses it. Rises and starts for door*) Well, here goes. I'll go right down t' th' post-office an' mail et' an' she'll git it pretty quick. (*pulls hat down over eyes*) Now, fer th' dirty work, as Helpless Harry says in th' boys' own library. (*opens door and bumps into EDITH and MRS. H. Quick exit*)

(*Enter EDITH and MRS. H. EDITH first.*)

MRS. H. (*turns and gazes after AB*) Well, I wonder what's th' matter with Ab? He must hev found some clew thet wouldn't wait th' way he went out o' here.

EDITH. (*dozen L. c.*) Oh, if he only could. But I'm afraid there's no clew which would help father. He must have been crazy when he did it.

MRS. H. Yes, an' thet's th' only thing thet ever will save him from th' gallows. But I don't hold out much hopes o' thet.

EDITH. Mother, what are you saying? Oh, it can't be. There must be something to prove him innocent. He couldn't have done it. (*drops into chair down L.*)

MRS. H. (*going to her*) There, there, Edie. Calm yerself. Of course he didn't do et, but we must be prepared fer th' worst. Many an innocent man has been hung on circumstantial evidence. Now ef Dan could only do somethin'.

EDITH. (*rises and crosses.* MRS. H. R.) Dan? Don't talk to me of Dan. A man who will prove a traitor in love would sell his best friend for a mess of pottage. Dan Chamberlain has gone out of my life forever. Oh, mother, how could he do it?

MRS. H. (L. c.) But maybe yer mistaken, Edie.

EDITH. (R. c.) Mistaken? Didn't I see them with my own eyes? Didn't he dare to stand right in front of me and kiss her? Didn't he leave with his arm about her shoulders? And he had just asked me to become his wife.

MRS. H. (*crosses up c.*) There, there, Edie, don't give way.

EDITH. (*wipes eyes*) I won't then, mother. I'll try to be brave.

SHERIFF. (*enters door L.*) Why, howdy do, Mrs. Hazelton. Howdy do, Edie. What kin I do fer ye?

MRS. H. (C.) We come t' see Rube.

SHERIFF. I'm sorry, Mrs. Hazelton, but ye can't

see Rube without an order from th' prosecutin' attorney. I presume, though, (*looks at EDITH*) thet thet will be easy t' git. Ye probably won't hev t' ask twice, Miss Edie.

MRS. H. What, can't see my own husband without an order from th' prosecutin' attorney?

SHERIFF. (*abashed. Comes down L.* MRS. H. *goes L. C.*) Well, Mrs. Hazelton, et's none o' my doin's. Dan told me t' keep Rube separate from th' other prisoners an' treat him jest as if he was at home. I don't believe Dan thinks he's guilty an' I'm sure he wouldn't object t' you an' Edie seein' him. You jest ask him, Edie.

EDITH. (R.) Me ask a favor of Dan Chamberlain? No, not even to see and comfort my father, a victim of circumstances and a law which is supposed to hold a man innocent of crime until he is proven guilty, but which has exactly the opposite effect.

SHERIFF. (*crestfallen*) Why, Edie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean t' offend ye. I didn't know you an' Dan had had any trouble.

EDITH. Well, sheriff, you've said it and that's all there is to it. But if you wish to be considered among my friends please do not mention the name of Dan Chamberlain to me again.

(*Enter DAN and GRACE. Door R. EDITH does not see DAN. GRACE remains at door.*)

EDITH. But may we see my father?

SHERIFF. Ye'll hev t' ask Dan.

DAN. (*down C.*) No, she won't. Sheriff, you will allow Edith—

EDITH. Miss Hazelton to you.

DAN. Very well. Sheriff, you will allow Miss Hazelton and her mother to visit the prisoner at any time.

SHERIFF. All right ef ye say so, Dan. (*goes up L. and unlocks barred door*) Right this way.

(MRS. H. and EDITH cross to door. MRS. H. exit.)

EDITH. (*turns to DAN*) I suppose I ought to thank you, and I do. (*starts to hold out hand, but thinks better of it and turns and exits through barred door*)

(SHERIFF exits and locks door. DAN goes R. C.)

GRACE. (*comes down C.*) I wouldn't care, Dan. She isn't worth it.

DAN. (*angrily*) But she is worth it. Now, Grace Evans, you and I must come to an understanding. You say you have a clew which may result in the clearing of Rube Hazelton. Under the impression that you spoke the truth I have walked with you and talked with you. I have been in your company so much that the village gossips are busy. And that kiss you gave me the night of the murder. I almost believe you knew what you were doing. That kiss, Grace Evans, was a Judas kiss. I can't understand Edith's changed attitude toward me, but I'm sure you had something to do with it.

GRACE. (*also angrily*) Did it ever occur to you, Dan Chamberlain, that because you are the prosecuting attorney that doesn't give you the right to control the affairs of every one in Bradford county? I've done my best to help you and this is the thanks I get for doing so. If I thought Edith desired to become reconciled to you I'd be the first one to intercede for you. But have you stopped to consider that perhaps the reason she does not let you explain is that you might have a good explanation? Don't you think it possible that Edith has changed her mind and simply is trying to let you down easy? (*laughs and turns away to L.*)

DAN. (*follows GRACE*) Let me down easy? Why, what do you mean? What excuse could she have for treating me the way she does?

GRACE. I don't know, unless father——

DAN. Yes, father. What has he done now? He tried his very best to beat me for office. He used tricks any honest man would scorn and he spent money like water. I hadn't a cent, yet I won. And now he has poisoned the mind of the best girl in the world against me. Yes, let's talk about father. (*crosses to R. C.*)

GRACE. (*L. C.*) Oh, I didn't mean that.

DAN. Well, then, what did you mean?

GRACE. I meant that perhaps father——

DAN. Yes, go on.

GRACE. Perhaps father has won her.

DAN. Won her?

GRACE. Yes, won her. Do you suppose Edith is such an ideal woman, such a paragon of goodness, that money, position, fine clothes, European tours, servants and a fine home would not tempt her?

DAN. (*crosses to GRACE L. C.*) Grace, what are you saying? I know Edith Hazelton better than that. And now I begin to see light. Your father has told her something. I don't know what, but I know it to be a lie. And you are in the plot, too. I don't know why, but you and your father have conspired to wreck our happiness. And both of you have lied. Grace Evans, if you were a man, I wouldn't have allowed you to talk to me the way you have.

GRACE. (*contemptuously. Takes cross to R.*) If I were a man? And if I were a man, Dan Chamberlain, I would show more common sense than you seem to possess. I'd know when I was turned down. (*changes tone*) But you have wronged me. I never have told Edith anything. I've even begged father to give up his ambitions in that direction. Dan, I've done every thing I could to atone for the wrongs father has done to you. And in return I am slandered. Oh, Dan. (*weeps. Turns R.*)

DAN. (*crosses to R. and pats her on shoulder*)

Now don't cry, Grace. Perhaps I spoke more harshly than I should have done. But forgive me if I have hurt you. I didn't mean to. (*turns to c. sees EDITH as she enters from barred door L.*)

(*Enter MRS. H. and SHERIFF. MRS. H. crosses up c. SHERIFF remains at door.*)

DAN. (*starts toward EDITH*) Edith.

EDITH. (*draws back*) Don't touch me.

DAN. But, Edith, I must speak. I have been misunderstood just as long as I intend to be. Won't you grant me an interview?

EDITH. An interview would make no difference in my feelings toward you, but if it will ease your mind, speak.

DAN. I should prefer that the interview be private.

(*MRS. H. goes to door R. and sheriff starts to withdraw into door L.*)

EDITH. Oh, don't go. Anything I have to say to this man is public property. He and I have nothing in common since, since—(*drops voice*)

DAN. Very well, then, it shall be as you wish.

(*Enter squire. Comes down below desk R.*)

DAN. Edith, I only wish to know why you treat me so. Why, you promised to marry me, Edith, and with the thought of such happiness uppermost in my mind I went ahead and fought when all the odds seemed against me and when it seemed as if I hadn't a single chance to win. And then you treated me cruelly. What have I done? Tell me, for heaven's sake, and end this suspense.

EDITH. Oh, I did love you, Dan, and when you asked me to be your wife it seemed as if I was the

happiest girl in the world. And if you hadn't proved false I might have been just as happy to-day.

DAN. (*starts toward EDITH*) Then someone has been lying to you. What have they said. Tell me, Edith. There is some misunderstanding.

EDITH. There has been no misunderstanding. I have the best evidence in the world, that of my own eyes. Go with her. (*points to GRACE*) Marry her. I care not what you do. Hang my father. It would be only a fitting conclusion for the other wrongs you have done me and mine.

DAN. But, Edith.

EDITH. (*ignores DAN and turns to SQUIRE*) Squire, will you escort us?

SQUIRE. (*bows*)

(*Exit MRS. H. followed by EDITH. Door in flat R.*)

SQUIRE. (*up to door. Laughs*) Good-bye, Dan, I wish you luck. You and Grace may have my blessing at any time.

DAN. Why, you—(*jumps for squire. SHERIFF grasps DAN by arms*)

SHERIFF. Now Dan. Remember, nothing rash.

DAN. (C.) You're right, sheriff. I mustn't lose my temper. But you—(*turns to GRACE*) I hope you're satisfied with your work. It was you who caused me to lose the only girl I ever loved. You, with your Judas kiss. That's what Edith meant when she said, "I saw you with my own eyes."

GRACE. (*comes C. and kneels before DAN*) Oh, forgive me, Dan. I didn't know what I was doing. Oh, Dan. Dan.

DAN. (*assists her to her feet. Still holds hands and talks into her face*) Didn't know what you were doing? You lie. You knew what you were doing all the time. You've played a shrewd game but there's still a fighting chance for me to win, and

I'm going to do it. (*drops GRACE's hand and crosses down to L. of c.*)

GRACE. (*weeps*) Oh, Dan, please, please. (R. c.)

DAN. Oh, don't worry. I do not revenge myself upon women. But go. (*points to door R.*) I never wish to see your face again.

GRACE. Dan.

DAN. Go.

GRACE. (*starts toward door. Turns and gazes beseechingly at DAN*)

(*Exits door R. weeping.*)

DAN. (L. c.) Sheriff, I'm going to resign.

SHERIFF. (*crosses to c.*) Resign?

DAN. Yes, do you think I could stand it to send the father of the girl I love to the gallows?

SHERIFF. But Dan, your duty.

DAN. (L. c.) Oh, I know, but does duty tell me to give up my ambitions, to send one of my best friends to the hangman, to give up the girl I love. Does duty make me the enemy of man? Tell me that.

SHERIFF. (R. c.) No, Dan. You're right. But just remember that by continuing to act as prosecuting attorney you have a chance to fail in yer case, to fail t' convince twelve men that Rube Hazelton is guilty of murder?

DAN. And the devil sends one of his imps in the guise of an officer of the law to tempt me. No, if I conduct this case, it will be conducted in the interests of the people who elected me. If Rube Hazelton is guilty he'll hang. If he's innocent he'll go free, and by heaven he'll be supposed innocent until he's proved guilty beyond reasonable doubt. I've changed my mind, sheriff, I'm going to try this case. And I'm going to prove to the world that Rube Hazelton is innocent.

SHERIFF. Thet's th' way t' talk, Dan. I wouldn't

fret about love affairs. When Cupid hits folks with his arrows th' wound ain't o' th' healin' kind. An' I don't believe et was th' blunt end of an arrow thet hit you an' Edith.

DAN. (*crosses R.*) I hope you're right, sheriff, and something seems to tell me you are. But I came to see Rube. I will interview him here if you please.

SHERIFF. All right, Dan. (*exits through door L.*)

DAN. (*seats self in chair by desk*) I wonder if the sheriff is right? I hope so. But sometimes it seems more than I can bear.

(*Enter SHERIFF and RUBEN. RUBEN goes c. Appears pale and worried.*)

SHERIFF. (*to RUBEN*) Dan wants t' talk t' ye. I'll leave ye alone with him. (*exits door L. in flat*)

RUBEN. Hello, Dan.

DAN. (*rises. Shakes RUBEN's hand*) Heilo, Rube, are they treating you well?

RUBEN. (*L. C.*) As well as could be expected, but to a man in my position th' best o' treatment is torture. Dan, is there any hope fer me?

DAN. (*R. C.*) There's always hope, Rube.

RUBEN. (*eagerly*) But hev ye found anything?

DAN. (*shakes head*) Nothing. (*comes down R. C.*)

RUBEN. (*comes down L. C.*) But Ezra, he said I wasn't guilty.

DAN. Yes, but Ezra has forgotten. He's your only hope at the trial, but it's a slim chance at best. It'll be pretty hard to get a jury to take the word of a boy who hasn't any mind.

RUBEN. But won't he git well?

DAN. No, Dr. Burton holds out no hope. At first he said he thought it would wear off in a few days but it didn't. The boy's skull wasn't broken by the

bullet but there was some sort of a shock to his brain that the doctor says only nature can heal.

RUBEN. (*hangs head, slowly crosses to L.*) I wish I knew what happened that night.

DAN. (*crossing to RUBEN*) Try to remember, Rube.

RUBEN. Oh, I've tried an' tried an' I can't do et. I've set there in my cell and waited fer something t' turn up. I've gazed out through th' bars on a little patch o' blue sky an' thought an' thought, an' I can't remember. I was too drunk thet night. (*sits in chair L.*)

DAN. Yes, you were fearfully drunk and tried to kill the squire previous to the murder at the mill. Why, if that is brought into the case your own daughter will be forced to bear witness against you. And then you know you were shouting for blood. Rube, if circumstantial evidence can hang a man, you are doomed. (*approaches RUBEN and places hand upon shoulder*) Cheer up, Rube. Don't make it harder for me than it is. I have enough trouble. What with Edith's love turned to hate and having to prosecute one of my best friends for murder—(*crosses slowly to R. Shakes head*)

RUBEN. (*raises head*) I won't give way, Dan. I'm goin' t' brace up an' take my medicine like a man. I don't believe I'm guilty an' although th' hand o' th' law has fastened its grip on me I believe et will relax an' that I shall go free. (*takes c.*) An' listen, Dan Chamberlain, ef I do go free et will be t' hate liquor like poison. I swear—(*raises right arm*) by all that is dear t' me thet I'll never touch another drop.

DAN. (*crossing to RUBEN*) Amen to that. (*grasps RUBEN'S hand*)

(EZRA enters through door R. flat.)

DAN. (*crosses R. To RUBEN*) There is your witness.

(EZRA *appears to be dazed. Comes down c.*)

DAN. (*gets chair from desk. Places it c. Leads EZRA to chair*) What are you doing here, Ezra?

EZRA. (*slowly*) I don't know. I seem to do things without knowing why. Et seems t' me that I had some reason fer comin' here, but I've forgotten. (*places hand to forehead*) There's somethin' wrong here. I can't remember. Was I hurt?

DAN. Yes, Ezra, you were injured. Don't you remember?

EZRA. No, Dan. You are Dan Chamberlain, aren't you?

DAN. Why, yes, you ought to know me. I grew up in Bradford the same as you.

EZRA. Yes, I know you. It seems to me you were trying to be elected.

DAN. Yes, trying to be elected. Elected what, Ezra?

EZRA. I don't remember.

DAN. Well, Ezra, I was trying to be elected prosecuting attorney.

EZRA. Yes, that was it, and there was some trouble. The mill——

DAN. Yes, yes, for heaven's sake go on.

EZRA. What was I saying?

DAN. You were talking of trouble at the mill.

EZRA. Was I? I'd forgotten. Yes, trouble at the mill. What trouble?

RUBEN. (*holds out hands appealingly*) Oh, Ezra, Ezra, try t' remember. Fer heaven's sake tell us what ye know. Th' life of an innocent man depends on ye.

DAN. (*stops RUBEN*) There, there, Rube, calm yourself. Let me conduct this examination.

EZRA. (*points to RUBEN*) Who is that? I seem to know him.

DAN. That's Rube Hazelton, Ezra, the man ac-

cused of having murdered George Gregory, Squire Evans' bookkeeper.

EZRA. Yes, an' th' mill burned.

DAN. A ray of light at last. Now, tell us, Ezra, you were there that night.

EZRA. Was I? I guess I was. I don't seem to remember jest where, but I seem t' remember a fire.

DAN. (*eagerly*) Yes, Ezra, there was a fire.

EZRA. I saw a fire an' someone was killed.

DAN. Yes, for heaven's sake tell us what you know. You saw the murderer. Was it Rube Hazelton, this man here— (*indicates*) who did the killing? Try to remember. Was it?

EZRA. I don't know. Sometimes I seem t' remember a murder. But th' face of th' man who did it, I can't see.

(*SQUIRE enters door R. in flat. RUBEN goes down to chair L. Buries face in hands. SHERIFF enters door L. in flat.*)

SQUIRE. (*comes down R. of c.*) And do ye call yerself a man, Dan Chamberlain, t' torture a half foolish boy. Is thet th' way ye practice th' third degree.

(*RUBEN rises and stands glaring at SQUIRE.*)

DAN. Torture? Look at that boy, Squire, and be proud of your work.

SQUIRE. Oh, th' prosecuting attorney has a kind heart.

RUBEN. Yes, an' thet's more than you hev, ye ol' villain. (*starts toward SQUIRE*)

SQUIRE. (*prepares to flee*). Now, Rube, don't git angry. Ye'd better be exercisin' yer brain in findin' a way out o' yer trouble than in conjurin' up wrong impressions o' folks.

RUBEN. Wrong impressions. Th' next thing

ye'll be sayin' is thet ye didn't rob me. But ye did, I swear ye did. Oh— (*goes for SQUIRE, but DAN steps between them and SHERIFF catches RUBEN*)

DAN. Take him back to his cell, sheriff. (*to RUBEN*) Have courage, Rube, I'll see you again before to-morrow morning.

RUBEN. (*to SHERIFF*) Oh, ye needn't keep yer hand on me, sheriff. I'll go quietly. Et's only th' sight o' him (*points to SQUIRE*) thet makes me lose my head.

(*DAN crosses L. and watches SHERIFF and RUBEN out. DAN L. C., SQUIRE R. C., EZRA L. U., at table.*)

DAN. Now, I'll settle with you, Squire Evans.

EZRA. (*rises, gazes intently at SQUIRE, points at SQUIRE*) I'm afraid of you. I'm going away t' try an' remember. But I can't. Don't let him hurt me, Dan.

DAN. Why, Ezra, what do you mean?

EZRA. I don't know, but I'm afraid of him. I'm going away. The lights— (*claps hand to forehead*) I see red, red. (*approaches R. F. door*) But, I can't remember. Oh, I can't remember. (*exit R. F. Door. Faintly, in distance*). I can't remember.

DAN. (*comes down L.*) I wonder what it is that he can't remember?

SQUIRE. (*comes down R. C.*) I'd like t' know as well as you. Haven't I been tryin' my best since th' night o' th' accident t' restore his memory? Haven't I paid his doctor bills? Haven't I atoned? Tell me that, Dan Chamberlain.

DAN. (*goes C.*) Atoned? Yes, you have atoned for that, but have you atoned for poisoning the mind of Edith against me? Have you atoned for that, I say? You've been lying to her, Squire Evans, and now, by heaven, you're going to tell me what you have said.

SQUIRE. (*shrinks in fear down R.*) Ye wrong me, Dan. I swear t' ye upon my honor I haven't told Edie anything.

DAN. Honor? Who are you to talk to me of honor?

SQUIRE. I tell you what's th' matter with you, Dan Chamberlain, you're jest mad because I'm goin' t' git Edie away from you.

DAN. You win Edith? Why, you scoundrel—(*grasps SQUIRE by shoulders and shakes him*)

SQUIRE. Help! Help!

SHERIFF. (*enter door L. Pulls DAN C.*) Dan, Dan, what are ye doin'?

DAN. Oh, I don't know. Whenever I see him I can hardly keep my hands off him, and when he jeers and uses the name of Edith, I, well, it is possible that I lost my temper. I, I beg your pardon, squire. I'm going out to walk and walk and try to think. (*starts for door R. F.*) I must think. I must think. (*exits door R. F.*)

(*SQUIRE holds hand to heart. Motions to SHERIFF to help him. SHERIFF assists SQUIRE to chair down L.*)

SHERIFF. (*L. C.*) Why, what's th' matter, squire?

SQUIRE. Et's my heart. Et seems t' be gittin' weaker an' weaker. Some day I'm afraid et will stop altogether.

GRACE. (*enters door R. F. Comes down C.*) Why, father, what's the matter?

SQUIRE. Oh, et's jest another o' those heart attacks. I feel better now.

(*SHERIFF takes stage R. C.*)

GRACE. (*crosses L.*) But, what have you been doing? What caused it? You know the doctor told

you too much excitement might prove fatal. Come, you had better return home with me.

SQUIRE. No, Grace. I came t' see th' sheriff on particular business. Ef I only could lie down fer a minute er two——

(GRACE *crosses* R. C.)

SHERIFF. (*crosses* L. To SQUIRE) Well, squire, I guess we kin fix thet. There's a cot in th' small room where I sleep at night. You kin jest go in there an' ye won't be disturbed. Hadn't I better git a doctor?

SQUIRE. No, I guess et won't be necessary. I'll be all right in a few minutes. (*to* GRACE) Ye won't need t' wait, Grace. Et's gittin' pretty late an' probably I won't be home until well along in th' evenin'. (*rises*) Will ye help me a bit, sheriff?

(SHERIFF *assists* SQUIRE *to door of flat* L. *Exit* SHERIFF and SQUIRE.)

GRACE. (*crosses up stage to chair by desk* R.) I wonder what can have happened. Why, I passed Dan only a moment ago and he looked about as pleasant as a thundercloud.

SHERIFF. (*enters door* L. F.) Ye'd better look after yer father, Miss Grace. I've got t' go into th' cell room fer a few minutes.

GRACE. (*approaches door* L. F.) Very well.

SHERIFF. (*looks around*) I guess et's about time t' light th' lamps. (*bus. of lighting lamps or electric lights*)

(SHERIFF *exits door* L., *bus. of unlocking, locking, etc.*)

ABNER. (*enter* R. F. *greatly agitated*) Holy smoke, but thet was a narrow escape. Sal was right

on my track. Since she got that letter, she's been lookin' all over th' village fer me. I guess thet wasn't a great scheme. But now thet I'm dead I ain't goin' t' be resurrected at th' wrong time. I want Sal t' git good an' worried before she finds me alive, an' then——

(Noise at handle of door behind table.)

ABNER. Gee, what's thet? Maybe et's Sal. I've got t' hide myself, but where? *(runs up and down stage excited)* Where th' deuce is a good hidin' place? *(spies wardrobe)* Jest th' thing. *(enters wardrobe and closes door. Pokes head out with hand to nose)* Gosh! I'm in a skunks' hotel.

(Noise at door L. F. ABNER slams wardrobe door shut.)

GRACE. *(enter door L. F.)* I thought I heard a noise. *(gazes about)* It must have been my imagination. *(comes down and sits L. in chair)* I believe Dan suspects the truth. If Edith ever finds out, well, I hate to think what would happen.

(ABNER peeks from wardrobe door. Holds nose. Rubs badge.)

GRACE. So far I've been lucky, and now if I only play the cards right I should win. That sprained ankle trick worked to perfection. She thinks Dan kissed me *(laughs)* but she'll never know it was a trick.

(ABNER pulls door.)

GRACE. *(rises)* Why, what was that?

(EDITH enters door R. F.)

GRACE. Why, good evening, Edith.

EDITH. (*ignores GRACE. Up R.*) Is Dan here?

GRACE. Dan? Why, what can you want of Dan?

EDITH. (*comes down R.*) I want him to forgive me for the cruel manner in which I have treated him. Grace, I'm going to ask Dan's pardon. I've been a fool.

GRACE. Yes, and you'll be more of a fool if you have anything to do with him. You'll only hurt yourself.

EDITH. Hurt myself? What do you mean?

GRACE. I mean that Dan Chamberlain doesn't love you any more. Can't you see he's playing a part?

EDITH. Playing a part?

GRACE. Yes, playing a part. Can't you see? Well, then I'll tell you. (*crosses to L. c.*) You and Dan have known each other ever since you were tiny children, and since that time you've expected that some day he would marry you.

EDITH. (*crosses to L.*) Well, what of it?

GRACE. (*c*) There's this much of it. Dan didn't have the nerve to tell you he didn't love you and thus wound your feelings, so he asked you to marry him, hoping you would refuse. You didn't refuse, so he decided to make the best of it. You saw him kiss me. That was a farewell kiss to me. He didn't know you saw him, but he knows it now. I'm going to tell you the plain truth. Dan deceived you. He loved me, but he thought it his duty to marry you.

(EDITH *weeps. Sits in chair L.*)

GRACE. Dan has asked me to marry him. He's forgotten you.

EDITH. (*rises to feet. Faces GRACE*) Grace Evans, you lie.

GRACE. (*shrugs shoulders, turns away R.*) Well, ask him and see.

EDITH. (C.) Ask him? You know I wouldn't do that after what has happened. No, let Dan go his way, and I will go mine. (*turns toward door R. F., starts for door, turns back toward GRACE*) But, Grace, if you have lied to me, beware. (*turns to door again. Weeps into handkerchief*) Oh, Dan, how could you? (*exit door R. F.*)

GRACE. (*laughs. Crosses to window R.*) Well, I think that settled her case for good. I don't think she'll bother me any more. (*gazes out window*) But, it's getting dusk. (*lights dimmed*) I must be going. (*crosses to door R. F. Turns. Mockingly*) Oh, Dan, how could you? (*laughs. Exit door R. F.*)

SHERIFF. (*enters door L., locks cell door*) I wonder ef th' squire is recovered. Et's gittin' pretty near time t' lock up an' I don't want t' keep him here all night.

(SQUIRE *enters door L. F. and crosses down C.*)

SHERIFF. Better now, squire?

SQUIRE. Yes, much better, although these heart attacks always leave me a bit weak.

SHERIFF. Well, I'm glad ye're better. I thought fer a minute I'd hev t' keep ye here all night. D'ye think ye kin git home alone?

SQUIRE. Yes, but I ain't goin' yet. I come here t' talk particular business with ye.

SHERIFF. (L. C.) Why, what kind o' business?

SQUIRE. Set down. (*indicates chair down L.*)

SHERIFF. (*seats self*) Well, what is it?

SQUIRE. Did ye ever see thet before, Luke Higgins? (*pulls photograph from pocket and hands it to SHERIFF*)

SHERIFF. (*gazes casually at photograph, then*

starts. Attempts to conceal agitation) No, who is it?

SQUIRE. Look again, Luke Higgins, alias Albert Hungerford.

(ABNER peers from wardrobe.)

SHERIFF. *(rises)* My God, man, what d'ye mean?

SQUIRE. Well, jest let me tell ye a little story.

SHERIFF. *(greatly agitated. Sits again)* Go on, man, go on.

SQUIRE. Up in a little town in the Michigan woods about fifteen years ago lived a man named Joe Davis and his wife. They seemed t' be very happy. But Joe's wages didn't amount t' much an' they decided t' increase th' family income by takin' a boarder. A man named Albert Hungerford, a feller thet worked in th' lumber camps when he was sober, went t' board with 'em. Albert Hungerford fell in love with th' woman an' they planned t' elope. But jest on th' night they intended t' flee, Davis, who was supposed t' be visitin' a sick brother in a nearby village, arrived on th' scene. There was a scuffle an' Davis was shot. He died th' next day an' since thet time th' Michigan officers hev been huntin' fer Albert Hungerford.

SHERIFF. *(rises. Goes L.)* But et was an accident. I swear et. Et was his own gun thet killed him.

SQUIRE. Oh, so you admit it, then?

SHERIFF. *(hangs head)* Oh, I s'pose 't ain't no use t' deny et. I'm tired o' fleein' from th' law. When I came here I changed my name an' tried t' forgit, but I couldn't. But, fer heaven's sake how did ye find out?

SQUIRE. Well, maybe I've been interested in lookin' up th' history o' various residents o' this community. Maybe I wrote t' th' Michigan sheriff

fer a picture o' Albert Hungerford. There it is. (*indicates*) Ye've grown a beard since then an' ye've changed quite a lot, but thet picture is a likeness of ye as ye appeared fifteen years ago.

SHERIFF. (*crosses to c.*) For God's sake don't give me up. Et was an accident. I swear et. Squire, squire— (*gets down on knees*)

SQUIRE. (R. C.) Ye don't need t' fear anything from me, providin'—

SHERIFF. (*rises*) Providin' what?

SQUIRE. Providin' ye help me in a little scheme.

SHERIFF. What kind of a scheme?

SQUIRE. Sheriff, what would ye do ef Rube Hazelton tried t' escape from this jail?

SHERIFF. I'd prevent him, of course, usin' force if necessary.

SQUIRE. Would ye kill him?

SHERIFF. What d'ye mean? (*gazes furtively around*)

(ABNER *shuts door of wardrobe.*)

SQUIRE. I mean what I say. I want Rube Hazelton t' attempt t' escape an' I want him prevented by force. In short I want Rube Hazelton killed.

SHERIFF. (*stretches to full height. c.*) Then ye kin git somebody else t' do th' job. I've killed one man by accident an' I'm damned ef I'm goin' t' kill another by design. Ef I return t' Michigan all I'll hev t' do is t' serve th' rest o' my life in prison. But I tell ye right now, Squire Evans, I'd rather do thet than do what ye ask. (*retires L.*)

SQUIRE. (*crosses to c.*) Very well, then, when ye're gazin' out through th' bars of a Michigan penitentiary jest remember I gave ye a chance. But, look here, Luke Higgins, or Albert Hungerford, whichever name ye prefer, ye won't be in any danger whatever an' after th' fuss blows over ye kin leave Bradford with \$5,000 o' my money in yer pocket.

SHERIFF. (*considers. Aside*) Penitentiary? Alone with my thoughts fer th' rest o' my life? God, I can't do et. (*aloud*) Squire, I'll do what you ask.

(ABNER *peeks again. Rubs badge. Shuts door again.*)

SQUIRE. I thought ye'd be reasonable after awhile. Now, what I want ye t' do is t' give me duplicate keys t' thet door (*points to door L.*) an t' thet one. (*points to door R. F.*) I'll fix things with Rube an' when ye hear a shot outside, well, you do th' rest.

(SHERIFF *goes to board and gets keys, gives them to SQUIRE.*)

SQUIRE. Now, go get Rube an' bring him here. At 10 o'clock ye will hear th' shot.

(SHERIFF *crosses to cell door. Exit SHERIFF.*)

SQUIRE. (*seats self in chair by desk R.*) Well, I've gone an' done et. Et's a good thing thet Luke doesn't know they found out th' shot thet killed Joe Davis was accidental. With Rube out o' th' way there's no chance fer anybody ever t' find out about th' minin' deal. Of course I might wait an' let him get hanged, but he might escape th' gallows in some way. An' ef he gits shot I guess et'll help my case with Edie.

(*Enter SHERIFF and RUBEN L.*)

SHERIFF. Now, Rube, I'm goin' t' leave ye alone with th' squire fer a minute. Don't git violent, fer th' squire tells me he kin help ye.

RUBEN. I don't know as I want any help from you, Squire Evans.

SHERIFF. Well, ye'd better listen t' what he's got t' say, anyway. I'll be back in a minute. (*exit through door L. F.*)

RUBEN. (*crosses to C.*) Well, what d'ye want?

SQUIRE. (*rises*) I want t' be yer friend, Rube, ef ye'll let me.

RUBEN. What? You a friend of mine? Now, thet's good. (*comes down L.*)

SQUIRE. (*comes down C.*) Well, I do. Now, look here, Rube, ye've misjudged me long enough. I want t' help ye, an' unless I do, ye're goin' t' th' gallows jest as sure as shootin'. I'm goin' t' help ye t' escape.

RUBEN. Escape? I've got a fine chance, haven't I?

SQUIRE. Yes, ye hev. I've got et all fixed.

RUBEN. Ye hev, hev ye? Well, jest supposin' I don't want t' escape?

SQUIRE. But ye do. Rube, d'ye want t' stay here an' be taken t' court an' convicted on a lot o' circumstantial evidence, includin' thet o' yer own daughter, who heard ye callin' fer blood an' who saw ye tryin' t' kill me? I don't hold no hard feelin's on account o' thet, Rube. Ye was drunk thet night an' possessed of an insane notion thet I had robbed ye, an——

RUBEN. I believe ye did rob me, too. Those mine stock certificates I got wasn't th' ones I paid fer, by a darn sight, an' ye know et, too, squire.

SQUIRE. Well, this is no time t' talk o' thet, an' some day I may be able t' prove t' ye thet ye misjudged me. But I don't want t' see ye hang, Rube. Ye don't want t' d'ye, Rube.

RUBEN. I guess yer right, squire. Maybe I did misjudge ye. Of course I might wait an' stand trial, but from th' way things look I haven't got a chance.

SQUIRE. Thet's th' way t' look at things. Ye

kin go away an' then yer wife an' daughter kin join ye later.

RUBEN. Squire, I'll do et. Jest show me how.

SQUIRE. Well, ye take these keys. (*hands keys*) They fit th' door t' th' cell room an' th' outer door. When ye hear a shot fired outside th' jail jest wait a minute while th' sheriff investigates. Then unlock th' doors an' get away.

RUBEN. I'll do et.

SQUIRE. Remember now. When th' shot is fired. (*goes up*) Oh, sheriff.

(SHERIFF *enters* L. F.)

Ye kin take Rube back t' his cell. I'm through. (*crosses to* RUBEN. *Aside*) Good-bye, Rube. Hev courage.

(RUBEN *crosses to door* L. SHERIFF *comes down to* RUBEN. *Exit* SHERIFF and RUBEN *door* L.)

SQUIRE. (*looks after them*) Th' plot is 'workin' t' perfection. Of course et's th' best way. (*exit door* R. F.)

ABNER. (*opens wardrobe door and emerges. Business of sneaking about from door to door. Very mysterious. Then comes c.*) Well, I'll be gosh dummed. I guess Dare Devil Dan never hed no case like this one. Gee, et's great t' be a detective— (*swells up*) But when th' shot is fired Detective Judkins is goin' t' be on th' job.

(*Noise at outer door. ABNER tears around quickly and exits in wardrobe.*)

SALLY. (*enters door* R. F. *Greatly agitated*) Oh, Ab, Ab. (*falls exhausted in chair at desk* R.)

SHERIFF. (*enters door* L. *Comes c.*) What's thet?

SALLY. (*rises*) I'm lookin' fer Ab. Hev ye seen him? (*falls again into chair*)

SHERIFF. No, he ain't been here. Why, Sally, what's th' matter?

SALLY. (*bawls very loud*) Oh, Sheriff, he's gone an' killed himself an' jest because we had a quarrel. He's in heaven with th' angels, playin' a golden harp an' inhalin' sweet perfume.

(*ABNER opens door. Holds nose with hand.*
SALLY continues. Pulls out letter.)

SHERIFF. (*crosses to SALLY and takes letter. Reads. Mock agitation*) Well, well, Sally, this is serious.

SALLY. Yes, et is. It's more than that. It's hell. (*bawls*)

SHERIFF. Why, Sally.

SALLY. Oh, I know et's wrong t' swear, but when a big, noble fellow like Ab goes an' kills himself. (*bawls. ABNER into wardrobe again. SALLY continues*) An' I loved him an' I didn't mean what I said, an', an'— (*bawls*)

SHERIFF. (*helps her to door, then comes L. C.*) Well, now, Sally, ye jest go home an' Ab'll come back all right.

SALLY. (*at door*) Oh, Sheriff, I hope so. An' ef ye see him tell him Sally's waitin' t' ask his forgiveness. But I'm sure ye'll find th' body of thet brave hero somewhere out under th' sky with a bullet hole in th' temple. (*bawls and comes C. again*)

SHERIFF. (*helps her to door R. F. again*) Now, ye stop yer cryin' an' go right home, Sally, an' in th' mornin' ef Ab hasn't showed up I'll find him fer ye.

SALLY. All right, Sheriff. I'll go, but not t' sleep. I'll jest pray thet Ab comes back safe.

SHERIFF. (*comes down c.*) Well, don't worry. Everything'll come out all right.

SALLY. Good night, Sheriff. Oh, Ab, Ab— (*bawls. Exits door R. F. Bawling grows fainter in distance*)

SHERIFF. (*watches SALLY until bawling ceases, then comes and sits at desk R. Bows head on hands*) Everything will come out all right. Thet's what I told Sally, but will et? Why should th' ghost o' th' past walk to-night t' haunt me? Why should th' blood o' th' slain call out fer vengeance. God, et's too horrible. (*rises. Goes down R. C.*) But I've got t' do et. Et's th' only way out. (*looks at watch. Looks out window R. Locks door R. F. Turns down lights. Locks cell door L. Lights dimmed. Locks wardrobe. Exit door L. F.*)

(*After pause shot is heard outside R. Cell door L. clicks. RUBEN enters, peers stealthily about, goes toward outer door. SHERIFF enters door L. F. with shotgun. As RUBEN puts key into door R. F., SHERIFF levels gun at his back.*)

SHERIFF. (L. C.) Oh, God, I've got t' do et.

ABNER. (*appears through top of wardrobe with horse pistols levelled at SHERIFF*) Drop thet gun, Sheriff.

CURTAIN.

Setting for Act 3.

A—Door

B—Window

C—Chair

D—Flat-top desk

E—Hall rack

ACT III.

(House is pitch dark. No lights anywhere except drop or table electric light on desk c. DAN is discovered asleep, head on arms on desk. After a pause blue lights behind back drop are slowly turned on to denote daylight. Blue lights grow stronger and are succeeded by yellow until stage is fully lighted. Desk at which DAN sits is covered with lawbooks, papers, ink-well, etc., and telephone.)

DAN. *(awakes, slowly rubs eyes. Glances at watch)* Daybreak. And before night Rube Hazelton will have been condemned to the gallows. There is absolutely no defense. I can see those twelve men filing in now and I can hear their verdict—Guilty.

(Noise at door R. F.)

DAN. *(turns)* Come in.

(Enter SALLY door R. F.)

DAN. Why, good morning, Sally, what brings you here so early?

SALLY. Well, yer ma wants t' know ef yer comin' home t' breakfast.

DAN. Oh, is that all?

SALLY. No, et ain't all. I want some legal advice.

DAN. Legal advice? Why, what's the matter?

SALLY. Well, et's jest like this. *(seats self chair R. of desk)* After Ab played thet suicide

trick on me last night, I was so blame mad thet I called our engagement off, an' now Ab says he's goin' t' hev me arrested fer breach o' promise.

DAN. Well, thet's rather bad.

SALLY. Bad? I should say so. But kin he hev me arrested?

DAN. (*smiles*) Well, that remains to be seen. We'll look up the law on the subject. (*goes to bookcase and gets lawbook. Returns to desk, seats self, opens book and searches for place*) Ah, here it is. (*reads*) Personal actions arising upon contract, express or implied, may be commenced by *capias ad respondendum* to recover damages for any breach of promise to marry, when the plaintiff or someone in his behalf shall make and attach to such writ an affidavit, stating therein that the plaintiff has a claim for damages against the defendant for the cause of action stated in the writ, and upon which he believes that the plaintiff is entitled to recover a certain sum, being more than one hundred dollars.

SALLY. But what's a capsicus conundrum?

DAN. Not capsicus conundrum, Sally, *Capias ad respondendum*.

SALLY. Well, whatever it is. What is it?

DAN. In plain words, Sally, et's a body execution.

SALLY. (*gets down off chair onto knees*). Oh, Dan, don't let 'em.

DAN. (*rises and assists SALLY to feet*) Don't let 'em hang me. I didn't do nothin' t' be hanged fer.

DAN. Hanging? Who said anything about hanging?

SALLY. Well, didn't you say thet capsicus conundrum meant execution?

DAN. (*laughs*) It isn't that kind of an execution, Sally. A body execution is merely a civil warrant.

SALLY. Oh! But I guess I'll marry Ab, an' then I won't hev t' monkey with all thet stuff.

DAN. Perhaps that's the best way out of it. At the present time when folks go to law the only ones who benefit are the lawyers.

SALLY. I guess yer right. But ain't ye goin' home, Dan?

DAN. No, I don't believe I care for any breakfast. (*head on hands again*)

SALLY. (*advances to DAN, places hand upon his shoulder*) Cheer up, Dan, maybe things ain't as bad as ye think.

DAN. But I'm afraid they are, Sally. What with Edith hating me and having to send her father to the gallows I'm afraid things are about as bad as they could be.

SALLY. Edith hatin' ye?

DAN. Yes, that's one trouble.

SALLY. Why, Edith don't hate ye.

DAN. (*rises and grasps SALLY by arm*) What's that you say? Say it again, Sally, say it again.

SALLY. (*shrinks R.*) Why, Edith cries every night on account o' ye, Dan. Et must be some sort of a misunderstandin'.

DAN. (C.) And she isn't going to marry the squire?

SALLY. I don't know as t' thet. She hasn't said nothin' me about et. But you jest cheer up, an' everything will come out all right. Now, look at me. Yesterday I was worryin' because I thought Ab was dead, an' he wasn't. An' to-day I was goin' t' be executed on a capsicus conundrum an' now I ain't. I'm goin' t' marry Ab an' then all I'll have is—trouble.

DAN. Perhaps you're right, Sally. I'll try not to worry. But you had better run along home and tell mother not to wait breakfast for me.

SALLY. All right, Dan. (*turns to go*) I hope ye slept some. Last night was a horrible night in

Bradford. I wish I knew what happened at th' jail.

DAN. So do I, and I will before the day is over.

SALLY. (*crosses, holds out hand to DAN, shakes it. Cross to door R. F. during speech*) Well, Dan, good-bye. Cheer up. Somethin' may happen before th' trial. Cheer up, Dan. (*exit door R. F.*)

(*Lights coming up.*)

DAN. (*sits on table L.*) A horrible night in Bradford? Yes, I believe it was. It reminds me of that passage from Julius Cæsar—"The graves did open, and the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."—But it wasn't the dead so much as the living who bothered me. What did Sally mean when she said Edith cried? Oh, I can't think. I'll take a walk.

ABNER. (*enters door R. F.*) I'll have th' law on her. Yessir. (*walks up and down R.*)

DAN. (*crosses to ABNER. Grasps him by arm*) For heaven's sake, Ab, what's the matter with you?

ABNER. Ah! (*grasps DAN by coat lapels*) You're it.

DAN. (*shaking self loose*) I'm what?

ABNER. Th' feller I want t' see.

DAN. Well, what do you want t' see me about?

ABNER. I want t' sue Sally fer breach o' th' peace.

DAN. Breach of the peace?

ABNER. Well, it's breach of somethin' or other. She refuses t' marry me.

DAN. Oh, I see what you mean. Breach of promise.

ABNER. That's it. Breach of promise.

DAN. Well, Ab, I haven't time now to bother with breach of promise suits. (*approaches door R. F.*) I'm going to take a walk to see if I can't

collect my scattered senses. But I want you to remain here until I return. I have a few questions to ask you in regard to that affair at the jail last night. In the meantime you can be looking up the law on the subject. (*laughs*) You'll find all the books necessary on the desk. (*takes hat from hall rack*) When I return I expect you to be conversant with the law on the subject. (*exit door R. F.*)

ABNER. (*walks over to desk. Picks up book*) Well, there's certainly enough books here. What's this. (*picks up book and reads title*) Howell's antiquated statutes. Well, I like t' look at pictures o' statuary. (*opens book*) They ain't no pictures in th' durn thing. (*throws book down*) Ah, here's another. (*picks up book and reads title*) Webster's dictionary. Jest th' book I want. Now, you, Squire Evans, jest wait till we meet. I've always wanted t' tell th' squire what I think o' him, but never knew enough big words t' do it. But now— (*seats self at desk and reads book*) Let's see. (*turns over pages*) Ah! Peaches. (*pulls out pencil and writes*) Orangoutang. Gee, that's a good one. (*turns over pages*) Pusillanimous. That looks good. (*writes. Turns over pages*) Ah! Quahaug. (*quauhock*) An American edible clam. That'll do for him. (*writes*) I guess I've got quite a list now, but it won't do any harm to swell it some.

SQUIRE. (*enters door R. F.*) Ah, Ab, doing some writing?

ABNER. (*looks up disgustedly*) No, I'm teaching an oyster how to jump rope.

SQUIRE. (*comes down R. Forced laughter*) Ha, ha, ha. That was very clever, Ab. But you always were a clever fellow.

ABNER. I haven't got a cent.

SQUIRE. A cent?

ABNER. Yes, wasn't ye goin' t' ask me t' lend ye money?

SQUIRE. Certainly not. Why, Ab, any time you need money, you know ye kin come t' me.

ABNER. (*aside*) Send for th' keeper. I'm ready t' go. (*to SQUIRE*) What's th' matter, Squire, goin' t' give yer money away so ye kin die poor?

SQUIRE. Oh, no, I jest wanted t' show my friendliness t' ye, Ab. (*aside*) I've got t' find out how much he heard last night.

ABNER. You a friend o' mine?

SQUIRE. Why, of course I'm yer friend. I always did admire ye, Ab, an' I always told everybody ye'd be a great detective some day.

ABNER. (*aside*) I'll bet he did. (*aloud*) Is thet so?

SQUIRE. Yes, it is. And by th' way thet was a pretty cute trick ye pulled off last night.

ABNER. Oh, ye mean hidin' in th' wardrobe. (*aside*) I knew et.

SQUIRE. Yes, ye know th' sheriff an' I was playin' a joke on Rube.

ABNER. Oh, is thet so? Well, I'd hated t' hev been Rube ef th' joke hed worked.

SQUIRE. Well, Rube wouldn't hev been hurt ef it had. But I s'pose ye knew all about et from what ye heard in th' wardrobe. How much did ye hear, Ab?

ABNER. Well, et was enough.

SQUIRE. Then tell me, what was it?

ABNER. I'm jest waitin' t' tell et——

SQUIRE. Ah!

ABNER. T' th' prosecutin' attorney. (*aside*) Now's my chance. (*grabs up paper, jumps to feet and faces SQUIRE. Aloud*) But I hev got somethin' t' tell ye.

SQUIRE. What is et?

ABNER. I want t' tell ye what I think o' ye, ye

ol' quahaug. Ye orangoutang, ye pusillanimous ol' hypocrite, ye, ye— (*shakes fist in SQUIRE's face*) ye ol'— (*walks up and down stage*) ye, ye— (*looks at paper*) ichthyosaurus, ye antiquated ol' fossil, ye,— (*approaches door*) Ye— (*opens door and turns to SQUIRE*) um, um, um— (*mouths it*) Bah! (*exit door R. F. Slams door*)

SQUIRE. (*sinks into chair at side of desk*) Well, I guess he must hev heard th' whole business.

GRACE. (*enter door R. F.*) Well, here you are. (*comes down*)

SQUIRE. Why, good mornin' Gracie.

GRACE. Yes, it's a fine morning. The early air must have braced you wonderfully to give you nerve enough to show up here after the way you bungled things last night.

SQUIRE. Why not? Th' boldest course is always th' safest.

GRACE. You are certainly lucky at picking out the boldest course. You're lucky that the sheriff didn't shoot Rube Hazelton and then bungle matters so you would be found out. But what are you doing here? (*crosses L.*)

SQUIRE. (*down R.*) I cum over t' attend th' trial fer one thing an' t' look fer Edie fer another. I've got t' square matters with her. Why, she was almost ready t' marry me.

GRACE. I wish she would marry you and have it over with. I'm tired of having her sobbing around in my way. If you only could get her promise to wed I would need fear nothing.

SQUIRE. Well, maybe we kin fix up some sort of plan. We must prevent them two from gittin' together. Sh!

DAN. (*enter door R. F., hangs up hat and comes down R., crosses to desk*) Good morning. Come to attend the trial I suppose. (*arranges papers at desk C.*)

SQUIRE. (*aside*) Thank heaven he hasn't seen Ab. (*aloud*) Good morning, Dan.

GRACE. Good morning.

SQUIRE. We did come t' attend th' trial in th' hope that we could be of some use t' ye, but I don't see how we kin help ye. I guess th' only way out of et is fer ye t' quit yer job.

DAN. (*sits c.*) I've thought it all over, Squire, and I've decided to go ahead with the case. If I don't someone else will and someone else might not have so much regard for the rights of Rube Hazelton as I. Yes, I'm going on with it.

SQUIRE. (*crosses up to desk R.*) Thet's th' right way t' talk, Dan, an' I'm sure everybody'll make et as easy fer ye as they kin.

DAN. But can I do anything for you?

SQUIRE. Not fer me. I've got a little business down street. My heart's been botherin' me quite a bit lately and— (*glances at watch*) I'm due at Dr. Burton's office right now. Good-bye, Dan, I'll be with ye at th' trial. (*crosses up to door R. F.*)

DAN. Good-bye, Squire.

(*Exit SQUIRE R. F.*)

But can I do anything for you, Grace?

GRACE. (*crosses up to L. of desk*) Yes, Dan. I've heard things in Bradford that I think you should know.

DAN. Things that I should know? What were they?

GRACE. I hate to be accused of being a tale-bearer. But, Edith—

DAN. (*rises. Speaks fiercely*) Edith? What about Edith?

GRACE. If you're going to act like a bear I'm not going to tell you.

DAN. (*bowing*) I beg your pardon, Grace, if

I seemed rude. I'm sure I did not mean it. What is it?

GRACE. Edith declared you were in a plot to send her father to the gallows.

DAN. (*rises and paces floor up and down R.*) My God! how can she think that? And when I'm doing my best to cheat the gallows for her father. (*Down R.*)

GRACE. I know you are misjudged, Dan, and I'm sorry. Really and truly I am. (*crosses to R. and places hand on DAN's shoulder*) Why can't I help you?

DAN. Help me?

GRACE. Yes, help you.

DAN. But how?

GRACE. By being near you and——

DAN. (*faces her*) Go on. And what?

GRACE. (*hangs head*) Oh, Dan, why do you make me say it?

DAN. Say what?

GRACE. (*extends arms to DAN*) That I love you. Oh, Dan——

DAN. (*starts back in surprise*) Love me, why what do you mean?

GRACE. I mean that I've loved you ever since we were children. In the old days I thought you cared for me. Oh, I was so happy. Oh Dan, can't you see Edith doesn't care for you? Can't you see it? And I love you, Dan. I love you and I don't care who knows it.

DAN. (*steps toward her*) Grace, you mustn't say such things.

GRACE. But I must. I must. I can't help it. Dan, in your present trouble, you need a wife.

DAN. But I do not love you.

GRACE. But you will. You will. I'll make you. Dan, I'll be so good to you— (*holds out arms again*)

DAN. Well, speaking about leap year——

GRACE. (*crosses L.*) So, that's the respect you have for me. You joke with me. (*crosses to door R. F. Turns to DAN*) Dan Chamberlain, I've bared my soul to you. I've debased myself because I love you. And you scorn me. Now, look out. You've heard the old saying that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. Before I get through with you you will have cause to remember it well. You couldn't win Edith. You might have won me. Now you can win neither of us. Good-bye, Mister Chamberlain. (*exit door R. F.*)

DAN. (*sits at desk c.*) Well, here's a pretty howdydo. But I guess she's right about winning Edith. Oh, if I only could see her alone. But I can't think. I've tried and tried. The morning air may be good for a tired body, but not for a tired brain. (*rises*) But this is no place to think. I want to be alone. (*picks up paper. Crosses to door L. Exit*)

EZRA. (*enter window L. F. Carries tin box*) I wonder why I came here. Oh, why can't I remember things when I try so hard? I know I came here for something. Oh yes, the box. Sometimes I seem to remember. It was that way when I went to the ruins of the mill this morning. I remembered where I hid the box, but I don't know why I came here with it. Oh, I can't remember.

ABNER. (*enters through window L. F.*) Can't remember what?

EZRA. (*down R. c.*) I don't know.

ABNER. (*c. Points to box*) What hev ye got there?

EZRA. I don't know. But et's fer Dan.

ABNER. (*crosses down R. c.*) Give et t' me an' let's see what's in et.

EZRA. (*hugs box closely*) No, no, et's fer Dan.

ABNER. Well, hev et yer own way, then, Dan'll

be here pretty quick. He's gone out t' take a walk. I want t' see Dan myself.

EZRA. (*starts for door R. F.*) Well, I'm going.

ABNER. Ain't ye goin' t' wait fer Dan?

EZRA. No, I'm goin' t' look fer him.

ABNER. Ef ye don't see him pretty quick ye better come back.

EZRA. All right. (*looks out door R. F., slams door and runs for window L. F. Exit window L. F.*)

ABNER. (*to L.*) Oh, I say, what's th' matter? (*goes R. to door R. F. Opens it and bumps into SALLY. SALLY and ABNER both fall*)

SALLY. (*rises*) Now, Ab Judkins, git up an' explain yerself. That's certainly a fine way t' greet a lady.

ABNER. (*rises and rubs hip. Up c.*) Yes, an' et's a dandy way t' say good mornin' to' a famous detective.

SALLY. (*coming down R. c.*) Famous detective. Well, you make me laugh. You a great detective? (*laughs*)

ABNER. (*following down c.*) Oh, go on an' laugh but et's true.

SALLY. Well, I'll argue th' matter with ye like th' lawyers do. Go on an' prove et.

ABNER. Well, ye know I was hid in th' wardrobe in th' jail last night?

SALLY. Yes.

ABNER. I heard a nice conversation between th' squire an' sheriff.

SALLY. Yes, go ahead.

ABNER. That's all.

SALLY. What's all? Why don't ye tell me what et is?

ABNER. Great detectives don't tell their clews t' everybody. But when th' proper time comes the prosecutin' attorney is goin' t' be surprised.

SALLY. Well, why don't ye go find Dan, instead

o' hangin' aroun' here when ye know he's gone out?

ABNER. Oh, I didn't come t' see Dan about thet. I come t' look up th' law.

SALLY. (*aside*) Gee, he means thet capsicus conundrum. Oh, Lord! (*changes tone. Aloud*) Ab, I think yer a great detective.

ABNER. Why, hev ye jest found thet out?

SALLY. Oh, no, I knew et fer a long time. Why I'm proud of ye fer what ye did last night. When I think o' what ye did do I could kiss ye.

ABNER. (*wiping mouth*) Well, I wouldn't object.

SALLY. Object t' what?

ABNER. Object t' hevin' ye kiss me. Come on. (*puckers up lips.*)

SALLY. Well, of all the nerve. (*slaps ABNER. Goes to R. C.*)

ABNER. (*L. C.*) Ouch! Now, thet's a fine thing t' go an' do, Sally. When ye know I love ye.

SALLY. What's thet?

ABNER. I love ye an' I want ye t' marry me.

SALLY. (*hangs head and scrapes floor with foot*) Oh, Ab——

ABNER. Now, don't say et.

SALLY. Don't say what?

ABNER. Oh, this is so sudden.

SALLY. That ain't what I was goin' t' say. (*aside*) But ef it wasn't fer thet capsicus conundrum.

ABNER. (*crosses to SALLY*) What was ye goin' t' say, Sally?

SALLY. I was goin' t' say—Yes, Ab. (*throws self into ABNER'S arms*)

EDITH. (*enters door R. F. SALLY and ABNER do not see her*) Ah, Sally. (*comes down L.*)

(SALLY and ABNER break away. Look shamefacedly at EDITH. EDITH smiles.)

SALLY. What d'ye want, Miss Edith?

EDITH. Oh, nothing. Only 'don't you and Abner think this is rather a public place to make love?

ABNER. Oh, et's all right fer engaged folks.

EDITH. Why, are you two engaged?

(SALLY and ABNER clasp hands. Nod assent.)

EDITH. That's fine.

ABNER. Yep, an' we're goin' right over an' git married now. Come on, Sally. (*drags her toward door R. F.*)

SALLY. (*hanging back*) But, Ab.

ABNER. Oh, thet's all right. I ain't goin' t' take a chance on losin' ye again. (*exit SALLY and ABNER door R. F.*)

EDITH. (*crosses to desk c.*) Oh, why can't I be as happy as they?

DAN. (*enters door L.*) Edith.

EDITH. (*goes down R.*) Dan. (*recovers self*) I mean Mister Chamberlain.

DAN. Oh, don't say that. Please don't say it, Edith. You've come to tell me it's all a mistake, that the promise you gave me that afternoon still holds good.

EDITH. No, the promise is broken. (*crosses to L.*)

DAN. (*down c.*) But why? For heaven's sake tell me what has so changed your manner toward me since the day of the murder. Tell me, Edith, has someone been lying about me? Tell me his name, Edith, and, bound as I am to uphold the law, I'll break it by killing him.

EDITH. Dan, Dan, you mustn't talk like that. I didn't come to talk of love. Dan, I can't talk of it. Can't you see how you make me suffer when you talk like that?

DAN. Very well. I will hear what you have to say. (*motions chair R.*)

EDITH. No, I prefer to stand. I came to see you about father. Is there any hope?

DAN. (*goes R.*) I'm afraid not. It's a clear case. (*EDITH sobs C.*)

DAN. (*continues*) There, there, Edith. Don't cry. Although the hand of the law seemingly has fastened a death grip upon your father Providence may yet send a way to pry loose the mailed fingers.

EDITH. (*goes L.*) Oh, I hope so, I hope so.

DAN. (*crosses to C.*) I hope so, too, Edith.

EDITH. What? Then you aren't bent on sending father to the gallows?

DAN. Why, certainly not. Who has told you such things?

EDITH. No one, Dan, but I have such morbid feelings and everything seems to be wrong.

DAN. Edith, if you would give me a chance to explain, everything will be all right. Why don't you, Edith? (*stretches out arms*) I am waiting—

EDITH. Please do not talk to me like that, Dan. Not now.

DAN. But is there no hope for me? What have I done? What horrible crime have I committed that I should be beyond pardon?

EDITH. Dan, please don't talk of it now.

DAN. But will you give me a chance to explain later?

EDITH. (*shakes DAN's hand*) I will.

GRACE. (*enter door R. F.*) Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't know I was interrupting such a sentimental little scene. I will go. (*turns to go*)

DAN. No, stay. The trial will soon be on and you might as well wait here. I have a little work to do if you will excuse me.

GRACE. Certainly.

(*EDITH bows assent. Exit DAN door L.*)

GRACE. (*comes down R.*) So you're going to give him a chance to tell you more lies?

EDITH. (L.) Grace, what is the matter with you? Are you jealous?

GRACE. (*sits R.*) Jealous? Of you? Well, that's a good one. I should say I'm not. Dan Chamberlain is going to marry me. Jealous of you? (*laughs*)

EDITH. I don't believe Dan is going to marry you. Just wait and I'll call him and ask.

GRACE. (*half rising*) No, don't do that.

EDITH. Oh, so you have lied.

GRACE. (*rises to feet*) No, I have not lied. But Dan would prefer to have things kept quiet until after the trial.

EDITH. Oh, can this be true?

DAN. (*enters from L. door with handful of papers*) Can what be true?

EDITH. Ask her. (*points to GRACE*)

DAN. (*to GRACE*) What does she mean?

GRACE. (*shrugs shoulders*) I don't know.

DAN. Edith, tell me, what does this mean? Is it Grace who has been lying to you? Is she the one who has caused this breach between us? Tell me. I command you.

EDITH. I don't think you have a right to command me.

SQUIRE. (*enters door R. F.*) Why, what's all this fuss about?

DAN. This fuss is the result of your lying to Edith.

SQUIRE. Me lying to her. Why, what do ye mean?

DAN. I mean that both you and Grace have been lying to her. That's what I mean.

SQUIRE. Ye wrong us, Dan, an' ye'll be sorry.

DAN. No, I don't. You wrong yourselves. Don't you know that every lie brings on another? Don't you know that every vile plot you engage in

sinks you to a lower level only to engage in a deeper and viler one?

GRACE. Come, father, we'll go. We are not obliged to remain here to be insulted.

DAN. Yes, go. (*points to door R. F.*) And keep on going until you are so far away that you will never be able to cause any more trouble in Bradford.

(GRACE and SQUIRE start toward door R. F. Enter EZRA with box. Goes c.)

DAN. (*down R.*) Why, Ezra, what are you doing here?

EZRA. I don't know. I think I came to give you this box.

SQUIRE. (*up R.*) Where did ye get that box? It's mine. (*attempt to take box*)

(EZRA draws back. Up c. L. and around to L. on SQUIRE'S speech.)

SQUIRE. (*up c.*) Give me thet box, d'ye hear? I want it. It's mine an' I'll hev et. (*goes after EZRA L. EZRA crosses and gets behind DAN c.*)

DAN. (*R. c.*) Give me the box, Ezra.

(EZRA gives box to DAN and retires up stage and sits chair R. of desk.)

DAN. Now, Squire, you may have the box——

SQUIRE. Thet's th' proper thing t' do, Dan. Et belongs t' me. (*crosses to c.*)

DAN. If you can tell 'me what it contains.

SQUIRE. But I don't hev to. Th' box is mine. Give et t' me, d'ye hear? Oh— (*places hand to heart*)

GRACE. (*up R. c.*) Careful, father. Don't become too excited. You know your heart.

SQUIRE. (C.) Yes, I know, but Dan Chamberlain hasn't any right to keep my property from me. Give et t' me, I say.

DAN. (R. C.) I will when you tell me what it contains. (to EZRA) Where did you get it, Ezra?

EZRA. (R.) Et seems t' me it has some connection with the night o' th' murder.

DAN. (*goes up to desk. Tries to open it*) Why, it isn't even locked. (*opens box, sits at desk and draws forth papers*)

SQUIRE. (*crosses up L. of desk, attempts to snatch papers but DAN holds them out of his reach*) Give 'em t' me I say. Give 'em t' me. They're mine.

DAN. That remains to be seen. (*looks over papers again*) Why, what's this? A certificate of stock in the Rosebud Girl, one of the richest copper mines in Arizona. And it's made out to——

EDITH. (L.) Who?

DAN. Ruben Hazelton. (*rises, crosses down R. with papers*)

EDITH. Why, that isn't the mine father invested his money in.

DAN. No? Here's another paper. A letter. (*reads*) To Edward Evans, Esq., yours of the 16th received, together with power of attorney to collect dividends on stock held in name of Ruben Hazelton. In the future dividend checks will be made payable to you and mailed to your address. Very truly yours, Henry Hanlon, secretary and treasurer Rosebud Girl Mining Company. (to SQUIRE) So that's the way you robbed Ruben Hazelton, is it? Why, you old scoundrel. But you're going to answer for it. There is just one thing I've been wishing since I have held the office of prosecuting attorney, and that is that I could get you in my clutches.

SQUIRE. It's a lie. A lie, I say.

DAN. (*at desk c.*) Well, you shall have a

chance to prove that in court. And I also believe you were responsible for an attempt to murder Rube in the jail last night.

SQUIRE. (*L. of desk*) Thet's another lie.

ABNER. (*enters door R. F.*) No, et isn't, Squire Evans.

SQUIRE. (*aside*) All is lost. (*aloud to ABNER*) What d'ye mean?

ABNER. (*crosses up C. to L.*) I mean thet I heard all thet happened in th' sheriff's office last night. I heard th' way ye accused th' sheriff of bein' wanted fer a murder up in Michigan an' how ye forced him into tryin' t' kill Rube.

(*Enter SALLY door R. F. Up C.*)

ALL. (*but DAN*) Murder?

ABNER. Yes, murder.

(*Enter SHERIFF and MRS. HAZELTON. SHERIFF goes down R. MRS. HAZELTON goes up C. to SALLY.*)

ABNER. But th' sheriff has got only one murder t' answer fer, thanks t' th' wardrobe with th' skunk odor.

SHERIFF. (*steps forward*) Yes, an' he's ready to answer fer it, too. Folks, I did kill a man up in Michigan. It was an accident, but maybe th' law wouldn't consider et so. God knows I've suffered enough without being taken t' prison fer th' rest of my life, but ef th' law says et must be thet way, I suppose et must. Dan, ye kin lock me up an' then notify th' Michigan officers where I am.

DAN. (*comes down to SHERIFF*) They know where you are, Sheriff.

SHERIFF. Then they were comin' after me anyway?

DAN. No, Sheriff, they know it was an accident.

SHERIFF. Accident! Thank God. (*sinks into chair R. and covers face with hands*)

DAN. Yes, I've known it all along and thought you also knew it. I said nothing because I didn't want to stir up unpleasant memories. But go on, Abner, what else

ABNER. An' I heard Grace talk about th' plot she put up t' separate you an' Edith. I heard her say thet sprained ankle trick an' th' kiss she give Dan worked t' perfection.

GRACE. You lie, Ab Judkins, you know you lie.

DAN. No, he doesn't lie. Otherwise how would he have known about the sprained ankle trick? Why, within an hour after the accident you were walking without a limp. And the kiss you gave me. So that was it? And then you told Edith——

EDITH. (L.) No, I saw it myself. I saw her kiss you and then you went to the gate with her and you had your arm around her. Oh, Dan, can you ever forgive me?

DAN. Edith— (*stretches out arms and EDITH goes into them*)

GRACE. (*up C.*) Yes, it's true. As well as I have played my cards I have lost. (*to DAN*) Well, what are you going to do with me?

DAN. (R. C.) I have nothing against you, Grace. You may go. (*GRACE exits weeping, door R. F.*)

EDITH. (*breaks away from DAN*) But, Dan, what of father?

DAN. Well, he may appeal to the Supreme court, but I'm afraid there isn't much hope.

MRS. HAZELTON. (*comes down*) No hope! Oh, Dan, don't say that. And how can we appeal t' th' Supreme court when we haven't any money?

DAN. No money? Why, Rube owns stock in the richest copper mine on earth. (*to SHERIFF*) Where is Rube?

SHERIFF. In th' courtroom in charge of one o' my deputies.

DAN. Go and explain to the judge and bring him here for a moment.

(Exit SHERIFF door R. F.)

DAN. *(continues)* Now, we shall see whether Rube signed that power of attorney or not.

SQUIRE. Oh, this is all very pretty, but supposin' he didn't.

DAN. Then you'll go to jail where you belong.

SQUIRE. Yes, but I'll be out in a little while an' Rube Hazelton never will get out. This little scene is all very pretty, Dan, but it ain't goin' t' help ye a bit.

(SHERIFF and RUBE enter door R. F. RUBE comes down R.)

DAN. Rube, did you ever sign a power of attorney to allow the squire to collect dividends in the Rosebud Girl mine for you?

RUBEN. No, I don't own any stock in thet mine.

DAN. *(picks up paper and hands it to RUBEN)* Yes you do. Look here.

RUBEN. *(glances at paper. To MRS. HAZELTON)* Martha, we're rich.

SQUIRE. *(down L.)* Well, all this doesn't clear Rube of th' murder o' George Gregory. But I'm not goin' t' wait fer any more. I won't stay here t' be insulted. *(starts for door R. F.)*

EZRA. *(gets in front of SQUIRE)* Don't go yet, Squire.

SQUIRE. Out of my way. *(strikes EZRA with cane. EZRA falls)*

(ABNER grapples with SQUIRE. Throws him down L. again. SHERIFF crosses L. to side of

SQUIRE. EDITH *crosses down R.* DAN *runs to side of EZRA. Kneels.* SQUIRE *holds hand to heart apparently in great misery.* SHERIFF *helps SQUIRE to chair L.* EZRA *recovers.* DAN *helps him to his feet.* EZRA *brushes hand across forehead. Comes down to chair R. of desk.)*

EZRA. Why, what does all this mean? Where am I?

DAN. (*R. of EZRA*) You are here in the prosecutor's office.

EZRA. That's right, and I jest come t' tell th' prosecutor about a murder up at th' mill.

DAN. What are you saying, Ezra. Do you remember?

EZRA. Remember? Why, et jest happened.

SQUIRE. Why, what's all this?

DAN. It means that Ezra has recovered his memory. It means that his mind has been a blank since the night of the tragedy. It means that the cruel blow you struck him just now has worked the miracle that medical skill was powerless to do. The shock which Dr. Burton said might restore his mind has come. For heaven's sake, Ezra, speak.

MRS. HAZELTON. (*comes down back of desk*) Yes, for God's sake, go on.

EZRA. Well, et was this way. I went up t' th' dam fishin' in th' afternoon an' I fell asleep right under th' window o' th' mill office. I was awakened by voices an' I saw two men quarrelin'. Suddenly a box come flyin' through th' window. Then George Gregory yelled, "I've found ye out, ye robber, an' I'm goin' t' tell." Then th' other grabbed up a hatchet an' struck out with et. Th' man who fell was George Gregory, th' other was——

(SQUIRE *is visibly agitated during EZRA's speech.*)

DAN. For God's sake, Ezra, who was the other man?

EZRA. (*rises. Points to SQUIRE*) Th' other man was Squire Evans. (*SQUIRE springs to feet*)

RUBEN. Thank God.

SQUIRE. Et's a lie, I say, a lie. He found out about th' mine, but I didn't mean t' kill him I swear et. (*clasps hand to heart and falls back into chair*)

DAN. Sheriff, arrest Squire Evans.

SHERIFF. (*crosses to SQUIRE. Looks surprised. Listens at SQUIRE'S heart. Places handkerchief over SQUIRE'S face*) Et's too late.

DAN. Why, what do you mean?

SHERIFF. Squire Evans is dead.

(*RUBEN goes to arms of MRS. HAZELTON.*)

DAN. He is beyond the reach of the hand of the law.

(*SALLY embraces ABNER, who is up c.*)

(*Final curtain. Climax positions.*)

1—EDITH

2—DAN

3—SHERIFF

4—SQUIRE

5—RUBEN

6—MRS. HAZELTON

7—SALLY

8—ABNER

9—EZRA

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